



FACTVM  
FOVNDATION  
FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY  
IN CONSERVATION

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Public statement – 14/05/2021

## Secretary of State permits boutique hotel on historic Whitechapel Bell Foundry site

It is with great sadness that we announce the outcome of the Planning Inquiry around the Church Bell Foundry in Whitechapel. Our sadness is really focused on the values that lie behind the decision. Consent has been granted to turn London's oldest company, founded in 1570 and working until 2017, into a hotel, several restaurants, bars and a private members club.

We fought to demonstrate that a bell foundry is viable when technology and craft skills work in tandem with artists and innovative thinkers to shape a city that cares about more than the money.

Rethinking the metrics of value can be dismissed as naïve. Curiosity, inventiveness and renegotiating the relationship between art, science, technology and sharing things that facilitate an enjoyment of human communication should be valued more than an increasingly virtual notion of financial value.

Over four years of fighting, we have built a movement of like-minded people. With the help of Grayson Perry and other artists, we are now going to demonstrate how new markets for bells will celebrate the vital role they play within the public imagination. Grayson's Post-Covid Bell is in production and will be the evidence of what can be achieved. It will also sound a death knell for one of the greatest examples of living heritage, that preserved the skills of bell making in Whitechapel for almost 500 years.

Factum Foundation would like to thank everyone who has done so much to support the revitalisation of the foundry. These include local people, the mosque, craftsmen, artists, former employees of the bell foundry and many others for whom the sound of bells matter.

We believe the Secretary of State made the wrong decision. Our task is now to demonstrate the viability of our approach. The future of bells lies in the synaesthetic nature of digital technologies, the artistic desire to merge shape, sound and materiality and a growing awareness that the quality and sustainability of life is in our hands.

We will post regular updates about Grayson Perry's Post-Covid Bell and we will announce new projects that will both revitalise bell making and preserve traditional bell-making skills.

We welcome your continued support as much as we have done over the last years.

The future of the London Bell Foundry starts now.

Adam Lowe  
Founder of Factum Foundation



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### **Additional Resources**

- Charles Saumarez Smith on the decision of the Secretary of State – [click here](#)

### **Stephen Clarke, Re-Form Heritage said:**

“Sadly we were too late. It is tragic that our planning system allows you to shut down the business activity, lock the doors for 4 years and then achieve a change of use especially when the business activity is your 400 year-old heritage.”

### **On Factum Foundation**

The Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2009 in Madrid by Adam Lowe. It works alongside its sister company, Factum Arte, a multi-disciplinary workshop in Madrid dedicated to digital mediation and physical transformation in contemporary art and the production of facsimiles. The Foundation was established to demonstrate the importance of documenting, monitoring, studying, recreating and disseminating the world’s cultural heritage through the rigorous development of high-resolution recording and rematerialisation techniques. The Foundation’s activities include: building digital archives for preservation and further study, creating and organizing touring exhibitions, setting up training centres for locals to learn the different technologies developed by the Foundation to record their own cultural heritage, and producing exact facsimiles as part of a new approach to conservation and restoration.