

## **Proposal for *The Bell***

An exhibition by The Utopian Megapraxis collective  
for Pallas Projects/Studios, Dublin, Ireland

Sound breaks silence. To make noise is to exclaim existence. To be heard is to engage another in the construction of a soundscape. While it can be made visible, sound is the unseen, the invisible vibrations which communicate the world to us. At Pallas Projects, The Utopian Megapraxis would like to make a sound communicating its desire to build a better world.

For the exhibition at Pallas, The Utopian Megapraxis will commission the casting of a bell.

Historically, the bell has been a tool for the construction of society. As a symbol, the bell has carried many meanings as its function changed throughout time; it has been used to signify imperialism and wealth, the religious call to worship, town to town communication as a warning device, as a timekeeper, and even as a musical instrument. However, the bell has never just been one thing at any one time. The meaning of a bell lies somewhere between its form and function, between the needs of those in power and the will of the people, between the communicator and the receiver; for a bell, as in a work of art, its efficacy as an object is in its ability to communicate information. As the world grows increasingly digital, individual, and fast-paced, and as the tools of the artist become more democratic, cheap, and widespread – the traditional meanings of the bell and of the artist are becoming diffuse. Their abilities to make noise and draw attention have lost the silence which gave them their power. Engaged and informed communities have been replaced by a global cacophony. But –

If the bell can no longer communicate a message understood by all, and if the artist is no longer the individual voice of the masses then it is time to redefine their role and function. We believe that this cacophonous breakdown of communal communication offers an opportunity to explore those in-between areas in which possible sustainable and equitable collective futures exist. The exhibition will explore the positioning of social activism and the construction of community as the primary role of the artist and artist-run gallery space in the 21st century. By situating the cast bell inside the center of the gallery, enclosed in a space, surrounded by takeaways of printed collective materials and essays, alongside digital links to the collective members practices and research around the world – the meaning of the bell when rung will take on a multiplicity of individual meanings. The sound of the bell will activate and vibrate within the space connecting the work and each viewer in a constructed soundscape of hopeful intention, with the takeaways moving this Utopian impulse beyond the exhibition into the public sphere.

To ring this particular bell will be to signal the death of old ways, to communicate the need for new visions and futures of societal reform; to signal that the role of all individuals is to collectively work towards a collaborative and enduring global utopia.

**Utopian Megapraxis**  
***THE BELL* Proposal Images**

Proposal is for the creation of a new work, images which follow are for explanation of process and concept.

For the exhibition, a bell will be cast from a digital model created by collective members Ian Anderson and Caroline Turner from a bell hanging in the theatre space of 33OC, an artist-residency space in Toffia, IT, The residency is housed in a deconsecrated St. Bernardino Church Complex built in the 13th century.

The original bell as it was found before restoration of the complex.

Image credit:  
33officinaCreativa, Toffia, IT





The original bell currently  
in-situ at 33officinaCreativa,  
Toffia, IT





The project is a continuation, and escalation of a series of exhibitions examining the para-real, a theoretical space existing between the physical and the digital. A space where translation occurs.

The Utopian Megapraxis translated the residency theatre, a space once sacred and now secular, into digital container, creating a para-real space where Utopian ideation could exist; where the boundaries between history and present, and fiction and reality collapse.

Image Credit: 33OfficinaCreativa



Translation of 33officinaCreativa, Toffia, IT from physical space to digital space.

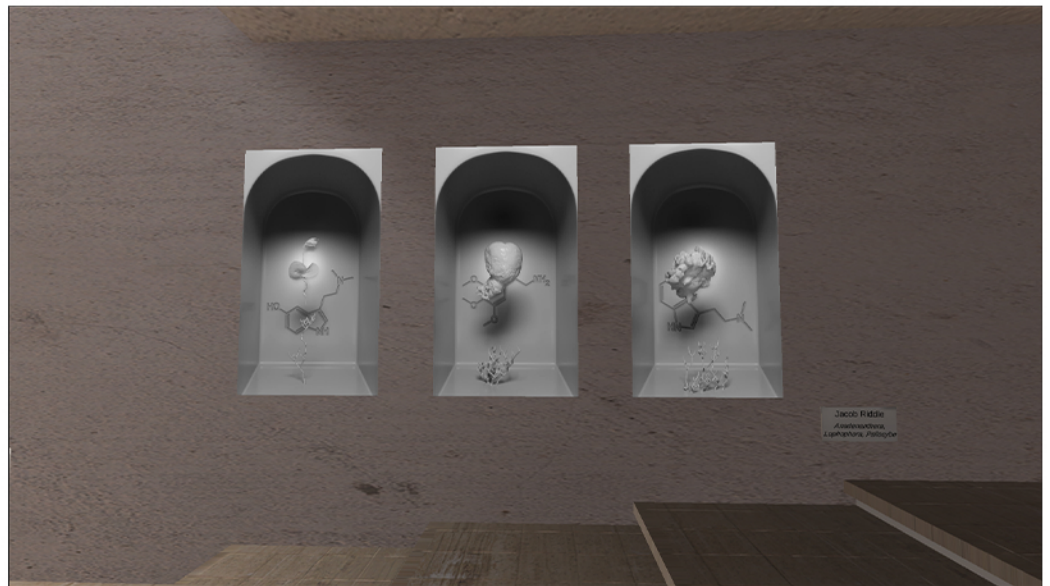


Environment created as container for digital exhibition for 2023 Wrong Biennale  
Image credit: Ian Anderson





Top image:  
Andy DiLallo, Jacklyn Brickman



Middle Image:  
Jacob Riddle

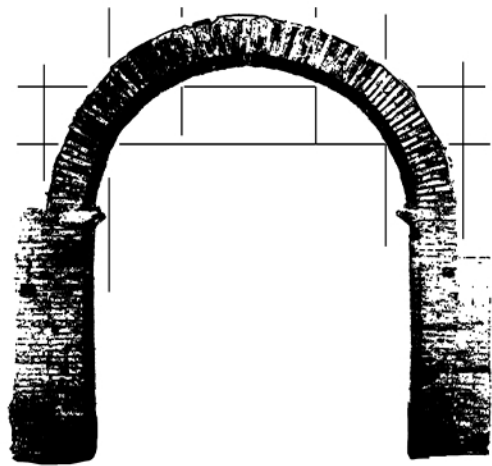
Bottom Image:  
Solar Noon Collective.

The UID (Unique Identifier :: Utopian Inspirational Daemon) Pavillion, explores the creation of a spatial utopia – a ‘non-place’ created from the maintained ruins of a deconsecrated 13th century church (a sacred space made secular) translated as a digital space transcending both the sacred and secularity of the physical. Exploring place as the empty shell or container of history while simultaneously exploiting and envisioning its potentialities is a key function of imagining Utopia.



Stills from UID (Unique Identifier::Utopian Inspirational Daemon





Documentation from UMD :: Utopian Manifestation Daemon at Vinegar Projects,  
Birmingham, Alabama  
Image Credit: Ian Breidenbach, curator

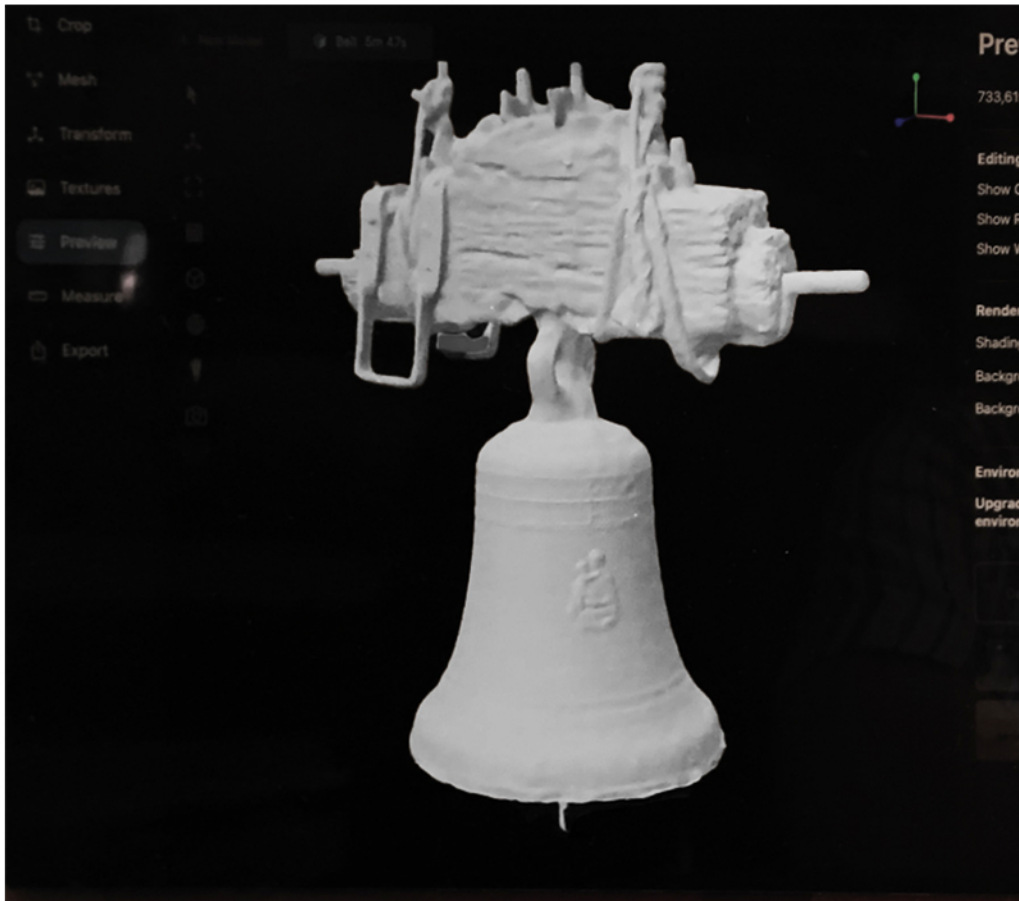
Can you relocate through the para-real?

The church became an abstracted space when digitized, its elements re-presented to point to the original forms. However, what we find in the para-real space is a represented symbolic, signifying both to the representation and the interpretation, but also to the blindingly clear impossibility of itself. In the Pavilion, the viewer can never access the level of inseparability provided by the digitality of the container and the work it contains; its feeling of oneness.

*UMD :: Utopian Manifestation Daemon* at Vinegar Projects in Birmingham, AL was an attempt to bring the work from the digital pavilion back into the real world. Architectural elements of the church were photographed, digitized and turned into decorative vinyl elements in an attempt to manifest the space for the “Utopian Inspirations” offered by the singularity of the Pavilion back into its parts, relocating them as temporary holders of space.

The UMD problematizes the ability of the UID to escape its para-real boundaries. Can we legitimately represent the potential for Utopia created in the para-real? Or are we only creating signs which point through it?





Digital renderings of the scanned bell made by Ian Anderson from the original church bell of the San Bernardino complex in Toffia, IT.

For the exhibition, a new bell will be commissioned for casting in Dublin, by local craftsmen, made from the digital renderings and added artistic embellishments made by members of the Utopian Megapraxis.

## **Bios for Curator and Steering Committee members of the Utopian Megapraxis Collective**

Born of the question: What is the endgame of Civilization? The Utopian Megapraxis is a non-situated community of artists, curators, writers, educators and thinkers invested in the process of envisioning a global Utopia. A theoretical megaproject with architects spread across time zones and disciplines, their work is imaginative, speculative, and future-oriented, but with the goal of moving towards equitable reality in the present.

**Ian Breidenbach (Curator and founder of Utopian Megapraxis Collective)** is a conceptual artist, curator, and educator based in Findlay, Ohio. In 2012, he founded [The Neon Heater Art Gallery](#), an artist-run space servicing the community of Findlay, Ohio and surroundings, providing access to contemporary art in a rural setting. His artistic practice explores the connective quality of narrative in the creation of worlds and possible futures. He holds a BFA from Wright State University in Selected Studies: Video Art (2009) and an MFA in Studio Art from Texas Tech University (2022). He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at The Ohio State University at Lima, OH teaching Studio Art and curating The Farmer Family Gallery.

In 2018, he received the Palmer Scholarship from the Toledo Art Museum to conduct national research into Artist-Run Galleries and community engagement. In 2022, alongside members of The Blue House Gallery, he organized [Futures: A National Artist-Run Symposium](#) in Dayton, Ohio to bring together gallerists from around the country to explore the issues, difficulties, and imagine possible futures of the Artist-Run gallery community. This symposium follows years of research into the way that art can be a catalyst for community engagement, and how the Artist-Run model of curation is specifically suited to thinking about collaboration between artists and non-artists alike. He is currently focused on gathering together artists, writers, and thinkers who share this hope for better futures, in an attempt to collectively envision an equitable Global Utopia and ultimately take steps towards its creation.

**Jacob Riddle** is an interdisciplinary artist and educator with a passion for foraging connections between technology and the natural world. Drawing inspiration from his background in construction and labor industries, as well as his upbringing wading through the limestone creeks of the Appalachian foothills, Jacob has embarked on a creative journey to bridge the gap between these seemingly disparate realms.

Having honed his ingenuity and cultivated experiential learning through the challenges of rural Appalachian life, Jacob now channels this unique perspective into the realms of art, technology, and academia. His work serves as a testament to the power of resilience, resourcefulness, and the harmonious coexistence of the digital age and the natural world.

**SHADE** (Marina Sachs—working under the name SHADE since 2021)—uses anything they can get their hands on to make work. Scrappy, science fictional, and directly informed by their lived experiences through addiction and sobriety, SHADE's work is just as much here to stay as it is willing to fade into shadows.



Marina's work consistently includes analog photography, painted works, and installation, and has always included collaborative, and co-created production with communities. Marina is the Professor of Analog and Digital Photography at Santa Fe College.

**Jacklyn Brickman** is a visual artist and educator whose work entangles science fact with fiction to address social and environmental concerns by employing natural entities, processes, and technology. Her work spans installation, video, and performance, with a special interest in cross-disciplinary collaboration and social engagement. Fellowships include The National Academy of Sciences, Chaire arts et sciences, Jentel Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and Erb Family Foundation. She has exhibited her work internationally. Brickman resides in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Council of the Three Fires – the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. Indigenous nations of the Great Lakes region are also known as the Anishinaabe. Brickman is Assistant Professor of Kinetic Imaging at Western Michigan University.

**John O'Donnell** is a multidisciplinary artist who uses a variety of mediums to convey different messages. At times, his work is guided by a cultural topic, but often, the work avoids pointing at anything specific. He directs the viewer's awareness to vague conclusions through the arrangement of objects. This approach guides an investigation of topics pertaining to absurdity, illusion, construction, failure, and nostalgia. This work utilizes appropriated images and objects relating to American history, art history, popular media, and consumer culture to create rough-hewn assemblages. This collage sensibility reflects temporary solutions and failed ambitions within a culture saturated with irony and perpetual innuendo.

The popular media of his youth guides his aesthetic: Nintendo, MTV, Saturday cartoons, Blockbuster films, and action figures. Interested in commenting on the contradictions and folly in American culture, he sees America as an entity that needs to be entertained. He shares this view through an art practice that walks a line between Entertainment and Art. He strives to make work that contributes to the conversation of contemporary art while still being accessible to non-art audiences. Ultimately, he is a studio artist compelled to create experiences with ambiguous degrees of resolution through applied awareness of content and form.

**Leah Sandler** is an interdisciplinary artist, writer and educator based in Orlando, Florida. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Rollins College in 2014 and a Master of Fine Arts from University of the Arts in 2017. Recent exhibitions include the Corridor Project Billboard Exhibition, the 2020 Florida Biennial, Interstice at MOTOR (curated by the Residency Project) Los Angeles, CA, Utopian/Vermilion, a solo exhibition at ParkHaus15 in Orlando, FL, and CPCH Staging Area, a solo exhibition at Laundromat Art Space in Miami. Sandler's writing and projects have been featured in publications including Textur Magazine, Salat Magazin, SPECS Journal, and Mapping Meaning Journal. She is the author of The Center For Post-Capitalist History's Field Guide to Embodied Archiving, published by Burrow Press, and teaches at Stetson University in Deland, Florida.

Observing the decline of the Capitalocene from the sand pine scrub and urban sprawl of Orlando Florida, Sandler constructs parafictional worlds through mediums including video, text, drawing, and collaborative interdisciplinary projects. These parafictional worlds flesh out imagined post-capitalist institutions, rituals, histories, manifestos, and landscapes. Traversing these worlds, the viewer is encouraged, through a visual language of repeated symbols and colors present throughout discrete works, to consider the inconsistencies of the invisible ideologies that uphold and subtend our current system, and to visualize the precarity of our contemporary moment.

**Solar Noon** is the name of the collaborative artist-duo of Caroline Turner-Anderson and Ian Anderson, taking inspiration from the fleeting instant where the sun is positioned directly above a geographic location on any given day. Solar noon differs from our modern conception of “clock noon” and occurs an infinite number of times every day as the Earth rotates on its axis; shifting the point of consideration from East to West. The duo’s work explores speculative worldbuilding that merges narratives between our deep past as humans and the near-future through multimedia installations, digitally-fabricated sculptures, 3D animated videos, and AR/VR.

**Caroline Turner** is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and curator based in Cincinnati, OH where she is an Assistant Professor of New Media and Electronic Art at the University of Cincinnati. Her work and research explore technology, deep time, and speculation about the near-future through a wide variety of media and materials. She has shown her work in numerous venues both nationally and internationally. In addition to her studio practice, Turner co-founded IRL Gallery in 2016 with Ian Anderson, an exhibition space that blurred the line between seeing art *in real life* and viewing documentation online.

**Ian Anderson** is a professional 3D modeler and developer, most often working collaboratively with physicians in his role at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. He creates virtual games designed to mitigate pain in children, educate nurses, and conduct VR research. His own research explores the visual, sonic, and worldbuilding possibilities of virtual space through a broad selection of digital toolsets and software programs.

**Ann Trondson** is a Toledo, Ohio-based multidisciplinary artist whose work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions, including Neon Heater, Findlay, OH (2023), Wiregrass Museum of Art, Dothan, AL (2023), *C for Courtside*, Knoxville, TN (2019); *Salon 94*, New York, NY (2014); *Louis B. James Gallery*, New York, NY (2014); *College for Creative Studies*, Detroit, MI (2013); *MAK Center of Art and Architecture*, Los Angeles, CA (2012); and *Palm Spring Art Museum*, Palm Springs, CA (2010). She has participated in artist residencies at *Banff Arts Centre*, Banff, Canada; *Terra Summer Residency*, Giverny, France; and the *Guesthaus Residency*, Los Angeles, CA. She received her MFA from the *University of Southern California* and currently is the Co-Director of *Vinegar*, an artist-run, women-led nonprofit in Birmingham, AL that champions and exhibits artists who work in emerging and experimental art forms that push the boundaries of its medium. *Vinegar* opened its first permanent exhibition space, *Vinegar Contemporary*, in 2020.



**Ella Medicus** is an Ohio based artist who studied sculpture and expanded media at Alfred university in NewYork. Her approach to making is based in the opinion that artists exist in the liminal outskirts of society; always contemplating and reflecting on what they observe. She looks at the human body as a tool or lens of perception, finding the imperfections of its functionality and comparing observations from multiple schools of thought. She researches physics, mythology, spirits, angels, AI intelligence, the beginning of creation, time- all these aspects of the reality that we find ourselves in, allowing for fractals of insanity to unfold.

**Caleb Lightfoot** is an architectural designer and visual artist. His practice is rooted in the dual disciplines of architecture and archaeology and exists through both fieldwork and studio practice. He is interested in critical theory, media studies, and historical materialism, and these inform his work. Monuments and revolutions are a primary focus of investigations through both digital and print media, and he is interested in using both traditional and experimental modes of representation and their subversive capacities. He holds a M.Arch from Texas Tech University where he participated in the 2015 Land Arts of the American West program, and has been involved in several ongoing archaeological projects in Sardinia, Samothrace, the Peloponnese, and North Carolina. He currently works as an architectural designer in Washington, DC.

**Stephen Nachtigall** is a visual artist working in Arcata, California. He has exhibited throughout Canada, the United States, Scotland and Germany. He received a BFA in Sculpture from the Alberta University of the Arts and an MFA in Studio Art from the University of Oregon. His work considers the way in which human and non-human relations occur through a mediated perspective. His practice utilizes video, animation, sculptural installation and 2D formats. Nachtigall currently serves as Assistant Professor of Digital Media at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt.