



Cast and sandblasted.



Liquid bronze.

Bell charms

Swiss tradition, personalised. The ‘Berger Glockengiesserei’ foundry offers a fascinating in-depth look at the fine art of bronze bell casting.

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The Berger bell foundry looks back on more than 280 years of expertise. Every single piece is lovingly handcrafted in the traditional way. A standing special treat at Berger Glockengiesserei is an offer for customers to help cast their own bell – a unique and fascinating experience.

In the Middle East, the sound of a chiming bell means luck. In Swiss tradition, a bell is believed to fence off evil spirits and demons from house and home. As bell founder Roger Kern says: “What could be better than making luck a gift in the form of a bell?”

Mentioned in the Bern trade register of 1730 for the first time, the company looks back on a long tradition. Old bills of sale prove that the ground on which the bell foundry still stands today was sold to a certain Daniel Berger hundreds of years ago. These old sale bills are being kept with care and pride by the Berger foundry. However, the first casts were not crafted for bells but for bronze watchcases that became the first successful ‘Berger’ product. From there, the path took the company to crafting traditional cow bells, a product that remains the main attraction of the enterprise today. Both foundry and

store are still situated in the small village of Baerai at the foot of the Bernese Oberland mountains.

Berger bronze bells are popular with people from all walks of life, both the young and the old. Customers are mainly those who are looking for a traditional yet unique present. Internationally active Swiss, German and Austrian companies also make a huge part of the Berger clientele, as well as clubs and associations.

A bronze bell nowadays makes for a unique company or customer gift and many groups also enjoy the open workshop events where they can witness or partake in the traditional casting process. According to taste and function, a group can get involved in the casting process either in

parts or in full, from decoration through to pouring the liquid bronze. It is even possible to invite the Berger foundry team with their 'travelling melting furnace' to a specific event and experience the bronze casting first hand, away from the workshop.

The tradition of bronze bell making is several hundred years old. A positive model ('origin') is used to make the impressions in the sand moulds in which the pure bronze will later be poured. Two sand moulds are needed, one for the outside of the bell, and one for the inside, the 'core'. Sand, mixed with a binding agent, is being packed inside a frame to form the outer shape and include any custom lettering or ornaments desired. For preparing the die for the internal core, the mould is turned upside down and the internal core frame is attached. Then, the second sand mixture is poured inside the origin. After removing

the bronze model, the two parts of the die are put aside for a few days to harden, before casting begins. They get locked together and then it is on to the furnace where the liquid bronze, heated to over 1,100 degrees, is being poured into the dies. The sand binder burns off and after the bells have cooled sufficiently, the sand die is torn apart and the remaining sand removed from the bell. The bell is now manually turned and the raw surface is cut away. The turned bell is then ground to a fine finish. At last, the holding hole is drilled and the hammer (clapper) is assembled.

Protection of the environment is a key priority at the Berger foundry. Since 1992, only electro and gas energy has been used for the bronze melting process. The poured amount is pre-measured according to task to avoid excess energy and the sand used for the moulds is being recycled after each

process. Metal chips that come off with the turning of the bell to produce the typical shimmering rings are being fully re-used as well as the air pipes and any excess bronze from the pouring process. The traditional carved straps are made of plant-tanned leather only and even the packing at Berger Glockengiesserei uses recycled materials and wood shavings, with carbon neutral shipping being a given.

In 2017, the Berger bell foundry will continue extending their availability online as well as on-site, by perfecting both their warehouse and their factory store in Bäraustraße 8, Baerau, Emmental.

Luck be a chiming bell – with a unique and personalised gift from Berger Glockengiesserei.

www.swissbells.com/contao/index.php



Casting the bell.



Berger bell foundry.



Completed moulds.



Turning of the bell.



Final check.



Fasting the strap.