

# Sounding Cov

A Pilgrimage through Sound  
By Sara McCarthy of Performance Frequency



All photos by Sara McCarthy

## SOUNDING COV IS A PILGRIMAGE

that takes place every year in Coventry. The mode of transport is sound (Sanskrit mantra) and we journey through time. Rather than walking through land, for the pilgrimage of Sounding Cov, we stay still and allow the land to walk through us.

The first Sounding Cov took place in 2010. Open to all, participants ranged from a baby to adults over 70 years of age. More than 40 people supported this

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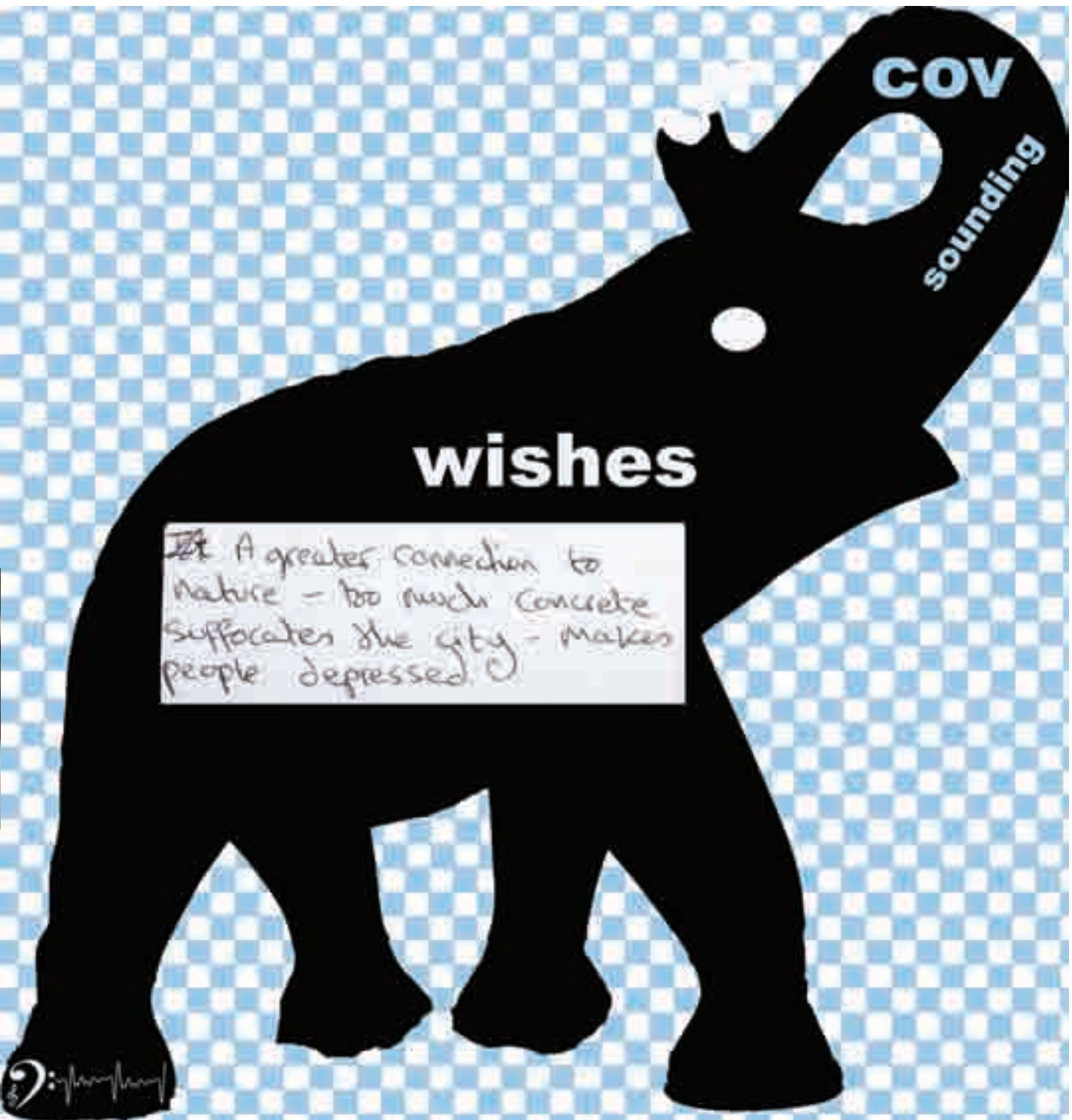
event, with over 15 people staying for the full 12 hour duration. The route of this pilgrimage was determined by strict landmarks in time: setting off promptly at

7pm, travelling through the night for 11 hours until 6am, followed by one hour of silence. The date was marked as the 14th of November, with a precise timing to mirror exactly the 11 hours of sustained bombing, the land had received 70 years before.

We offered four Sanskrit mantras, carefully selected for the needs of Coventry's land: 1) Clear obstacles and unify 2) Release a chain of distressful events and attract positive energy 3) Generate self-worth and

confidence and 4) Create peace (locally in Coventry and globally). The first mantra used in Sounding Cov, calls on the energies of Ganesha, often represented as an

Elephant, to clear obstacles and to help unify. Elephant is an important totem in Coventry's culture and can be seen throughout Coventry - from being part of the



City's Coat of Arms, to being on the top of bollards around the city.

People were invited to make a wish for Coventry on Elephant templates for Sounding Cov. Here are a selection of some of the wishes people made: a greater connection to nature – too much concrete suffocates the city- makes people depressed; artwork on the streets and annual racing around the ring road; a decent record shop; an energising modern place to be

where creativity is in abundance; more friendly dogs on the streets; respect for other people's views and wishes; a greater sense of integration – many cultures, one race, but where and how can we get to know each other better? As Sounding Cov is an on-going project, so are the wishes for Coventry.

Sounding Cov was received as a direct vision to be carried out, in response to a call from the land itself. It came from the land calling to reassert



itself into balance, particularly to strengthen the Feminine energy held in Coventry's land. Coventry has a strong masculine resonance: war, violence and fighting are familiar vibrations, visually the city is full of hard, angular structures, with a particular propensity for the use of concrete, while commercially, traditional industries such as manufacturing and engineering have dominated. While Coventry may house creative, sensitive and healing people, their existence is not widely reflected in the city's resonance – creative industries have not been actively nourished or encouraged, visually there is little nature, softness or fluidity in City structures and the presence of alternative or healing practices is barely visible. Sounding Cov is also inspired by the Singing Field work created by Chloë Goodchild. The specific mantras used in this project were those taught by Thomas Ashley-Farrand, to whom the event was dedicated.

Mantras are sacred words of power. They require discipline and commitment to recite and in exchange they reward us for our concentration and consistency by offering up a route of travel. Mantra can hold us and keep us in place. Every 15 minutes,

we were held in the vibration of one individual mantra. Within 1 hour, all 4 mantras were sounded: a process repeated over 11 hours. As the night went on and our journey progressed, we would put these mantras to the test, calling on all the energy their vibrations could provide.

Sounding Cov has been influenced by Timeline Therapy™ (developed by Tad James), which understands that by working at one specific point on a time line, the past and the future can be affected. Much of Coventry's identity and tourism industry, has been based on the resonance from this night in 1940. Despite its varied history, Coventry is frequently promoted as the city that was Blitzed.

Performance Frequency believes that the trauma experienced on 14th Nov 1940 has remained held in the land in Coventry City Centre, concreted over and has continued to influence the City's culture and psyche in a negative way. Sounding Cov makes a departure from the traditional way in which the Blitz is engaged with in Coventry. Performance Frequency believes that activities such as holding Blitz Balls, displaying ration books and sounding the sirens of trauma heard on the night Coventry was bombed, reinforces trauma and keeps the land held in a vibration which no longer serves it. Sound carries and what we hoped to carry through Time, was a different vibration which would allow the city a chance to release a resonance which was outdated.

The route for the pilgrimage of Sounding Cov had been dictated by trauma: it had never been travelled before and nobody knew what to expect. We were going in blind, with only our sound to carry us. We journeyed together as one group, simultaneously sharing collective and individual experience. Our sound started effortlessly, parting its way through the first few hours, in the spirit of buoyant adventure. As well as chanting, there was drumming, dancing, laughter, sleeping and listening. As our journey deepened, so did the demands to continue. In the true fashion of pilgrimages offering challenge, Sounding Cov was not without its obstacles. By chanting through the night, participants worked against the rhythms of their body clocks, resting for individual replenishment, as required. Together we made our way through the terrain, hour after hour, riding a current of sound, one Sanskrit utterance after another.

By 3am, our energy fell to its lowest sound. Personally, I didn't know if I could go on, every utterance feeling like a last breath, working against a feeling that I was going to die. Yet on I went, finding the strength within each mantra, to continue for minute upon slow minute, word by slow word. Chanting Sanskrit mantra for an extended period of time requires physical and emotional stamina.

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Chanting through the specific night of Coventry's history that we chose, required a particular grit and toughness of spirit. I came into an awareness of what the land of Coventry had received. At this low point, to continue felt like sounding through an energy which was intent on utter destruction: it took every fibre of my being and by the end of the 12 hours, I could no longer feel my lips. From 4am, our collective strength began to return, sounding better again at 5am and by 6am we galloped loudly into an hour's silence. In this silence, I was greeted by waves of gratitude from land and souls which moved me to tears. We Sounded Cov and in exchange, Cov sounded us.

While many traditional pilgrimages are undertaken in rural settings, the idea of healing the environment in our cities is given little attention today. The image of pilgrimage is frequently associated with open fields and beautiful spaces,

ancient places which have been revered for eons. Less common in city centres, full of concrete, litter and empty shops, it could be time for pilgrimage to sound urban.

Working with vibration and sound in the Sounding Cov way, Performance Frequency believes it is possible to support the land to become truly free from the trauma of Blitz, thus allowing the city's inhabitants and businesses to unify, prosper, and attract positive growth and wealth. It is also anticipated that, over time, this approach could support a reduction in the expression of violence in the City Centre and support an increase in the City's creativity. We intend to Sound Cov every year on 14 November and create a major music festival for the City of Coventry. 🎵

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