

THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF "COLLECTOR'S EDITION BOXES" OF THE LAUGHING COW®



PRESS KIT

An exceptional, *collector's* edition box designed by a renowned contemporary artist—this is how The Laughing Cow® is already preparing for its **100th** anniversary in 2021.

The Laughing Cow® (*La vache qui rit*®) is more than a smile and good humour. It's also an incredible story of innovation and creativity. And it's for this reason that between now and 2021 the company has planned an impressive series of collaborations with major contemporary artists, each of whom will design a not-to-be-missed *collector's* edition box.

France's favourite cow wants to share his enthusiasm for contemporary art with as many people as possible.

At the initiative of Lab'Bel, the artistic laboratory of the Bel Group, the design of the first *collector's* edition box was entrusted to German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann.

'I've been familiar with the Laughing Cow® since my childhood and in fact, everyone I've spoken to, young or old, is familiar with it too. This familiarity or renown therefore became the natural starting point of my project.'

'I didn't want to make my box synonymous with an art that nobody could understand. I wanted to create something that didn't look out of place in the aisles next to the regular boxes but at the same time, I wanted it to be more appealing to the eye. In short, a very simple challenge ... and one that I want to win.' Hans-Peter Feldmann

Hans-Peter Feldmann is an internationally renowned conceptual artist. He likes it when art becomes a part of our environment.



'There's more art in the ordinary imagery of our daily lives than you'll find in artistic circles or even in museums.'



©Hans-Peter Feldmann

The *collector's* edition box: a work of art in its own right

Hans-Peter Feldmann's *collector's* edition box is an original work of art in its own right. Available to thousands of consumers/collectors, it can be found wherever the brand is usually sold. Everyone can visit their local supermarket and choose to buy one or several boxes, either to keep or to enjoy.

The Laughing Cow® and Hans-Peter Feldmann

The image of The Laughing Cow®, while perhaps less famous than Michelangelo's David or the bust of Nefertiti, is nonetheless an iconic part of the imagery of our daily lives. Hans-Peter Feldmann has banked on this familiarity in creating his *collector's* edition box. The deceptively simple project offers an ironic and charming play on the image of the cow, which, despite various evolutions over time, has been familiar to generations of people since 1926. What most pleases Feldmann is that it is now possible to find art not only in museums, but also in homes—on the kitchen table and for the price of a single box of cheese. His basic intention for The Laughing Cow® project was thus to avoid the risk of not being understood by making 'high art' in the intellectual sense, preferring instead to create something which people would simply enjoy taking home with them.

Considering that Feldman, as a matter of principle, does not sign or limit the production of his works, this first instance of the *collector's* edition box of The Laughing Cow® is a unique event in the art world. Whoever buys Feldmann's creation obtains not a mere reproduction but an original work of art—and this at the price of a box of cheese. Consequently, thanks to this artistic initiative of the Bel Group, there will be thousands of new art collectors—or consumers. And it will be up to these 'owners' to decide whether they will keep the box unopened as a *collector's* item or eat its contents and throw the box in the trash. The result is a typical Feldmann project: playful but ironic at the same time, always delivered with a smile, and intimately linked to people and to their daily lives.



We experience ten minutes of happiness a day. But it's the rest of the day that interests me: the twenty-three hours and fifty minutes that do not contain any great moments, which do not bring happiness. Because, in the long term, it is these periods that constitute a life.'

Hans-Peter Feldmann by Michael Staab

Art critic and exhibition curator



*I like it when
things are simple.'*

Hans-Peter Feldmann's artistic maturity allows him to appreciate art even amongst everyday objects. With an attentive eye, he observes the insignificant, common things of everyday life things whose beauty and strangeness so easily escape our notice. He highlights the peculiarities of simple, familiar objects, thus decoding and renewing our perception of this universe of the quotidian.

A punnet of strawberries, originally purchased as a dessert may become the object of a photographic series on individuality. Photographs of his neighbour as she cleans her windows on fixed days come to symbolize our well-ordered existence. Moreover, a collection of magazine covers shows us how image-processing techniques render the beauties represented therein as universally alike, with nothing individual or distinctive.

Feldmann also enjoys playing with our deep-seated notions of what art should or should not be. By repainting famous sculptures like Michelangelo's David or the bust of Nefertiti, he makes fun of the importance of such works in the history of art while lessening some of their aura and distance. He has only to put a red nose on a historical portrait to bring the people they represent back to life again. Always with a smile.

Feldmann is a phenomenon, a genuinely atypical artist who deliberately ignores the rules of the art market. He refuses to sign his works or to limit his prints, which nevertheless does not prevent his works from achieving very high prices.

Obviously, this pleases him, but his particular conception of art has even led him to create a work of art from a monetary windfall—the hundred thousand euros he received in 2011 when his exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York was awarded the Hugo Boss Prize. He turned this money into an exhibition, quite literally, by pinning it to the wall note by note. The rules of the art market make it such that this installation could have been worth many times the value of the notes themselves. But the artist refused to follow such rules



*If there's one
thing I know, it's
how to observe.'*



I did that once, on a whim. But I would have really liked to have done it at home. That way, in the morning I would simply have had to peel off a note before I went out to do my shopping. That would have been great!

Behind their light and playful exterior, Feldmann's works are based on very profound motivations. He doesn't see himself as a sort of joker limited to implied references or allusions, but as a human being who experiences genuine anguish, a prisoner of the constraints imposed on him by society. His art functions as a release. And it is this possibility of liberation through art that he likes to share with us.



We are always thinking about the things we have to do, to accomplish. So we miss out on the beautiful things in life, things that are right in front of us. It's a shame, and I think this is the case for many people. They don't take the time to be calm, to notice the things they pass by. Perhaps we should take breaks from time to time in order to be better observers of things. In my view, if art has a use, it's precisely that it allows us to pause.'

A short biography of the artist

Hans-Peter Feldmann was born in 1941 in Düsseldorf. In the 1960s, he studied painting at the School of Fine Arts in Linz.

In 1968, he abandoned painting in favour of conceptual photographic series. In 1972 he participated in the international arts event Documenta. However in 1980, Feldmann withdrew from the international art scene, lamenting its indifference and lack of content. Having acquired a patent for metal toys from the 1920s, he opened a toy and antique store in Düsseldorf, in which he continues to work one day a week.

In the late 1980s, Feldmann made a return to the art scene, and in a short time, became one of the most internationally recognized German artists of conceptual art. Since that time, his work—photography, collages, artist's books, sculptures, objects and reworked ready-mades—have been presented in numerous major museums across the world, including the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Reina Sofia in Madrid. He has also participated in major contemporary art manifestations such as Documenta in Kassel and at the Venice Biennale. Today, he is considered to be one of the leading German artists on the international art scene, whose work has had a considerable influence on subsequent generations. Furthermore, in France, his works, books and exhibitions have earned him an ever-growing number of admirers.



2014



2010



2001

The Laughing Cow® and the arts

In 1921, when Léon Bel patented the brand name 'The Laughing Cow®', it had not yet occurred to him to entrust the creation of its visual identity to Benjamin Rabier. It was only in 1923, following a competition aimed at making the brand more appealing, that the famous design finally appeared on the product's packaging. Subsequently the two men began a collaboration that would last well beyond the death of Rabier in 1939, as evidenced by the publication in the 1950s of albums filled with cheerful pictures of animals.

Although Rabier's design is the best known today, the inventive advertising policy of Bel Cheese has led it to call upon the talents of many other illustrators as well. Luc-Marie Bayle, Corinne Baille, Hervé Baille, Paul Grimault and Albert Dubout have each lent their talents to the design of numerous gifts and surprises for young consumers. In 1954, the illustrator and radio presenter, Alain Saint-Ogan propelled The Laughing Cow® into his 'Animal Paradise'*. With this began a promotional legacy that would later assume many other forms, including in the 1970s, when Jacques Parnel instigated a veritable revolution in the brand's history by making the cow stand up and walk on its hind legs.

Parallel to its industrial activity, The Laughing Cow® has inspired many artists. Already in 1924, the painter Marcel Lenoir represented it in a still-life (which may still be seen in the Jura at La Maison de La vache qui rit®). The most famous re-appropriation is probably Bernard Rancillac's, who in 1966 depicted The Laughing Cow® as a sun in his canvas Our Blessed Mother Cow ('Notre-Sainte-Mère La Vache'). By his own admission, this leader of the 'Narrative Figuration' movement employed the image as a symbol of western consumerist society while recalling the Hindu prohibition. More recently, Wim Delvoye redeployed The Laughing Cow® as part of an impressive collection of labels during the 2005 Biennale de Lyon. The Darwinian reference in his work's title, On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life, boldly associates art history with the world of marketing.

In continuity with this double movement of collaboration and re-appropriation, it seemed only natural that the brand's imagery be revisited by an artist. And it was to Hans-Peter Feldmann that Lab'Bel, Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group, decided to entrust the execution of this first collector's edition box, inviting him to use his characteristic irreverence and playfulness to make The Laughing Cow® his own.

Laurent Fiévet

Artistic director, Lab'Bel, Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group

**From 1954 onwards, Alain Saint-Ogan presented a radio programme called 'La Vache qui rit au paradis des animaux' on Radio Luxembourg.*

A Chronology of The Laughing Cow®

○ 1923

Illustrator Benjamin Rabier offers Léon Bel his drawing of a Laughing Cow®. The following year the image appears on all packaging. It contains most of the characteristics that make the brand so recognizable to this day: humour of course, but also the colour red, the earrings and the mischievous eyes. Rabier's design was chosen over that of Francisque Poulbot, who had also been consulted by Bel. Nonetheless, the two artists would work together with Bel Cheese for many years, which is why one finds the drawings of Rabier and Poulbot on so many invoices and advertisements of the period..

● c.1929

In a sign of the brand's early recognition, Marcel Le-noir paints a still-life featuring a box of The Laughing Cow® in its center. La Maison de La vache qui rit®, still grateful to this now-forgotten artist, displays the original work in its permanent exhibition.

○ 1950

Bel Cheese collaborates with Alain Saint-Ogan. The partnership results in the publication of numerous advertising media created and signed by the artist: blotters, notebook covers, and a series of 10 children's books entitled *La Vache qui rit® au paradis des animaux / The Laughing Cow® in Animal Paradise*.

● 1966

Painter Bernard Rancillac, a representative of the Narrative Figuration movement, composes a work entitled *Our Blessed Mother Cow*, depicting a woman and a child in the desert carrying a jar (probably filled with water), beneath a sun that has been replaced by a box of The Laughing Cow®. A reproduction of the work would subsequently appear on a box of The Laughing Cow® in 1985 to mark Rancillac's participation in that year's FIAC.

○ 1971

Bel Cheese invites Jacques Parnel to participate in its new advertising campaign. Parnel 'dares' to represent The Laughing Cow® standing upright and clothed in diverse ways: in regional costumes, in a dress, in blue jeans, etc.

● 1975

Albert Hollenstein, a graphic designer and typographer, composes a round greeting card to send to his friends and customers. The card is directly inspired by The Laughing Cow® but replaces the cow with a laughing woman. The design outlines the shape of the individual portions and includes the well-known blue background, white stars, red face and white horns.

○ 1985

To promote the brand, the Bel Group commissions Franquin to create a promotional album. On the cover of this album one finds the famous Gaston Lagaffe sporting earrings identical to those worn by The Laughing Cow®.

● 2005

During the International Biennale for Contemporary Art in Lyon, Belgian artist Wim Delvoye presents an installation composed of 4,000 Laughing Cow® labels.



Lab'Bel, the Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group

Lab'Bel, the Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group, is behind the initiative to mark the brand's 2021 centenary with a series of *collector's* edition boxes.

Lab'Bel was born in spring 2010 out of the keen desire to engage the Bel Group in a broad policy of support for contemporary art. Led by director Laurent Fiévet and artistic director Silvia Guerra, Lab'Bel works with visual artists and actors from the world of contemporary art on projects that combine humour, impertinence, and the unconventional—the three themes on which the Bel Group bases its identity.

By virtue of its creative orientation and its association with the popular food brand, Lab'Bel's unique position in the world of French cultural patronage quickly became the object of significant attention. An itinerant platform, it has focused on 'decentralized' projects in the regions of France, as well as in Spain, Portugal and Greece. The Jura region of France, the historic cradle of the family business, was the natural choice as the principal site of its operations, primarily through the organization of events in collaboration with La Maison de La vache qui rit® in Lons-le-Saunier. These have included Rewind in 2010, *Même pas vieille!* in 2011, *Au Lait!* in 2012, and *Un œil dans la maison*, commissioned by Lab'Bel to Portuguese artist Miguel Palma in 2013.

In 2011, Lab'Bel took its first steps on an international level. Chosen as curator for the SWAB art fair in Barcelona, it organized *ART FOR LIFE / ART FOR A LIVING*, a collective exhibition that juxtaposed the work of the winning artists with artists-in-residence at other international centres of creation (Gasworks in London, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and Hangar in Barcelona), in order to raise questions about the status of the artist today and the relationship between an artist's mobility and his work. In collaboration with the Mies van der Rohe Foundation, Lab'Bel also invited artist Stefan Brüggenmann to create an installation for the pavilion that bears the name of the famous modernist architect. The resulting exhibition, *THE WORLD TRAPPED IN THE SELF*, was the first in a series of dialogues between contemporary art and architecture. This series continued in the spring of 2014 with *The Light Hours*: Haroon Mirza, an exhibition presented at Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in Poissy (Yvelines), France.

Lab'Bel has also been present in Portugal, as part of Guimarães, European Capital of Culture, with the exhibition *Metaphoria I* in the autumn of 2012. The project was followed by *Metaphoria II*, staged in Athens during the Athens Biennale in September 2013.

Born out of a dialogue on the idea of metaphor—a primordial stylistic figure that has the power to transport perception from one reality to another, and ultimately from reality to thought—*Metaphoria I* and *II* constructed a bridge between poetry, music and the visual arts.

Lab'Bel is also the driving force behind a corporate art collection currently housed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts [Fine Arts Museum] in Dôle.



Available in stores
from 17 november
until 31 December 2014

Round container,
24 servings,
plain flavour

BOÎTE COLLECTOR



Ceci est un authentique Hans-Peter Feldmann®

*Hans-Peter Feldmann est un artiste conceptuel allemand.

Average retail price :

€2,69

(source: Nielsen - price per box
excluding reductions
24P / HMSM / P8 2014)

Distributed
in mainland
France

75 000
copies produced

The Laughing Cow® in numbers

The Laughing Cow® in France:

- For generations, The Laughing Cow® has been the number one cheese among children
(source Nielsen /sales volume)
- 98% of children aged 7 to 12 and 98% of mothers know the brand
(source : Tracking Enfants IFOP November 2012 / Tracking Millward Brown 2012)
- 1 of every 2 families with children under 15 buy The Laughing Cow®
(source Nielsen / CAM P6 2014)
- 1,230,000 fans on Facebook

The Laughing Cow® around the world:

- Number 3 among cheese brands worldwide
(study: Zenith International - source: Bel Global Cheese 2012)
- 400 million consumers across the globe
(source Bel)
- 240 servings consumed per second
(source Bel)



MEDIA RELATIONS

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