

l'art en plus

## The Collector's Edition Box: sharing contemporary art

"*The Laughing Cow*® is the Pop art incarnation of the *Mona Lisa*."

Mel Bochner, 2020



The 7<sup>th</sup> Collector's Edition Boxes of The Laughing Cow®  
Mel Bochner – 2020

An artistic edition by Bel Group and Lab'Bel,  
its Artistic Laboratory

## Mel Bochner, creator of the 7<sup>th</sup> *Collector's Edition Boxes* of *The Laughing Cow*®

*The Laughing Cow*® cheese is a symbol of smiles, happiness and sharing, but it also represents an incredible history of creativity and innovation. For this reason, and in preparation of the celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2021, *The Laughing Cow*®, together with Lab'Bel, the Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group, has launched a remarkable series of collaborations, enlisting important contemporary artists to create its exceptional *Collector's Edition Boxes* series. Released each fall, these offerings renew the special rapport that has always existed between the brand and artists, some of whom were directly solicited by it, while others have merely used it as a source of inspiration.

In the eyes of the artists who create them, the *Collector's Edition Boxes* are full-fledged works of art. Each box offers purchasers a choice: to consume the contents, or to keep it intact as a collectible artwork. By jostling the logic of how contemporary art is perceived, as well as its modes of diffusion and its market—with its annual edition at a very affordable price—this playful contemporary art offering epitomizes the philosophy Lab'Bel has espoused since its creation in 2010. After Hans-Peter Feldmann, Thomas Bayrle, Jonathan Monk, Wim Delvoye, Karin Sander and Daniel Buren, it is to the American artist Mel Bochner that Lab'Bel has entrusted the creation of the 7<sup>th</sup> *Collector's Edition Box*. Available in two versions, it will be offered to the public for the first time as part of the 2020 edition of the FIAC, a partner of the project since 2016.

Weblink to all the *Collector's Edition Boxes*: [www.lab-bel.com/box](http://www.lab-bel.com/box)



**Mel Bochner** is one of the first artists to develop a practice identified as conceptual. Using painting, drawing, architectural contexts, sculpture and photography, his process-based practice questions the always uncertain relations between the world and the way we understand, experience and represent it.

Mel Bochner was born in Pittsburgh in 1940 and lives in New York. He has exhibited at the Dia:Beacon, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum, Jewish Museum in New York, Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., Tate Modern and Whitechapel Gallery in London, and Haus Der Kunst in Munich.

## Where to find the 7th *Laughing Cow*® *Collector's Box*?

- The *Collector's Box* will be available until October 17th at



in Lons-le-Saunier

([www.lamaisondelavachequirit.com](http://www.lamaisondelavachequirit.com)) and on the internet at <https://boutique.lavachequirit.com> while stocks last.

- from 17 to 28 November, distribution in **E.Leclerc**  shops throughout France

- from 18th to 22nd November, broadcast in the "Lab'Bel Galerie Ephémère", 5 rue des Blancs Manteaux, from 10am to 8pm. Nocturne on the 18th and 21st until 9 pm

\* Access to the ephemeral gallery will be done in compliance with the health standards in force.

## The *Collector's Edition Box*: sharing contemporary art

The *Collector's Edition Box* project was born of the desire to shake up ways of looking at contemporary art, its modes of distribution, and the art market through the edition of a very affordable artwork. The project can be said to continue the very special narrative that *The Laughing Cow*® has maintained with contemporary artists since its inception, while respecting the values of sharing, excellence and innovation promoted by the Bel Group, with which it is associated. Between now and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the brand in 2021, this project will be repeated on an annual basis.

Since 2014, six artists have successfully participated in the exercise of confronting and integrating the brand and its codes, and all that it has managed to build over time with their own particular practice, and in so doing, shifting its perception. They skillfully responded to the commission from the Group and its Artistic Laboratory by questioning its status and the iconic character of its laughing effigy. The first artist commissioned, Hans-Peter Feldmann, emphasised the mischievous dimension of the cow and pointed out the essence of its singularity. The second, Thomas Bayrle, used it as a motif in a broader graphic framework to further underline its popularity and the brand's integration into our society. The third, Jonathan Monk, took his smile in a new direction to enhance its value even further. The fourth, Wim Delvoye, has bounced back on his promotional story to be able to better feed it in a collection logic. The fifth artist, Karin Sander, playfully scrambled the image in a reference to the way in which its visual codes have entered into our everyday lives. The last, Daniel Buren, who was also the first to be approached by the Lab'Bel team, has for the first time declined it in four variants, understood as modular elements that can lend themselves to different forms of installation.

Some of the invited artists had already developed a very close bond with the cow and had previously introduced it in their artwork (Thomas Bayrle, Wim Delvoye), either occasionally or in a more substantial corpus of works spread over time; others took advantage of this commission to extend the image of the cow through other proposals (Hans-Peter Feldmann and Jonathan Monk), thereby emphasizing a form of coherence between their approach and what they had been asked to do. There were even some artists who, need we recall, served their own collectors' interests by diverting the history of the brand in a very personal incursion that was not without serving their own glory (Wim Delvoye) – but is it not this project's very peculiarity to generate this type of temptation?

All the artists took very different and often dizzying directions exploring the new perspectives that these opened, and drawing on the emulation generated by their inclusion in a series so brilliantly executed by their predecessors. They all took to heart the challenge with which they were entrusted, becoming part of the history of a brand which, despite its historical roots in a form of tradition, has underlined its timeless nature and an undeniable form of contemporaneity through this type of project. I can say with some degree of confidence that the Group, its employees and directors, but also the family that has been at its head for five generations, and of which I have the honor of being a member, are extremely grateful to these artists. Furthermore, we take great pride in these successive collaborations. I allow myself, on their behalf, to extend our warmest thanks.

The project has now found its audience. Welcomed since 2016 by the FIAC, the International Art Fair in Paris, in the prestigious setting of the Grand Palais, at the invitation of its director Jennifer Flay, it has quickly established itself as a highly anticipated event coveted by contemporary art amateurs and lovers of the brand. The box has stimulated the public's collecting tendencies and has found its place in the homes of the most demanding of collectors, both individual and institutional. It is displayed on kitchen tables and bookshelves, just as it is stored away from light and moisture in the most secret of warehouses, while banking on the surpassing of its expiration date. For example, the first editions, no longer available, are now very sought after and speculation is high, following market-like logic.

Initially available in some supermarkets, for the most part in France but also abroad, the *Collector's Edition Box* has been distributed via the Internet since 2017, which has increased its audience. The conclusion is indisputable: the brand has clearly become a valuable ambassador of its authors, contributing to giving contemporary art a more accessible and reassuring image, and developing an awareness of conceptual practices sometimes unknown to the general public. What very quickly emerged in the company as an object of pride and a constituent element of its culture, is today presented internationally as a case study used to explain to business and marketing students the extra meaning that a brand needs to bring to its consumers if it intends to distinguish itself from others, an action that has contributed to the success of *The Laughing Cow*® since the '20s. This recognition is equally strong in the contemporary art world where, edition after edition, the relevance of the various proposals has been demonstrated. The project has also revealed the possible relationships that could exist between art and business.

The Bel and Lab'Bel teams are very happy to continue this project by unveiling this seventh *Collector's Edition Box* signed by the American artist Mel Bochner. It comes in two versions, each of which we hope will whet your appetite in its own way.

Bon appétit and happy collecting!

Laurent Fiévet  
Director of Lab'Bel,  
The Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group

## Mel Bochner's *Collector's Edition Box* for Lab'Bel

" *The Laughing Cow*® is the Pop art incarnation of the *Mona Lisa*.<sup>1</sup>

Mel Bochner, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Since the mid-1960s, Mel Bochner has been a central figure of contemporary art by virtue of his both generative and disruptive works and critical texts. His oeuvre is known for staging formal and theoretical speculations on language and essential questions on the production of meaning. Using painting, drawing, architectural contexts, sculpture and photography, his practice questions the always uncertain relations between the world and the way we understand, experience and represent it. How does a thought take form through a support that modifies its meanings? In which ways does photography transform its subject? What are the relations and disjunctions between a space and its measurement? How do different colors connote the meanings of an object, or a word?



Mel Bochner, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art*, 1966. Installation view at the School of Visual Art in New York.

After studying Art and Philosophy, Bochner became a notoriously sharp art critic in New York for the influent *Art Magazine* and a crucial figure in the critical reception of Minimalism, the latest movement that overwhelmed the art scene of the mid-1960s. In 1966, as a teacher at the New York School of Visual

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with the author, 2020



Arts, he showed a pivotal work that would later be considered a seminal Conceptual artwork. *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art* resulted from a process for which, due to various constraints, he decided to xerox copies of working drawings he had borrowed from his artists-friends, who were none others than Carl Andre, John Cage, Eva Hesse, Dan Graham, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt and Robert Smithson, who were then, or soon to become, the superstars of the international art scene. He gathered four copies of the xeroxed papers and additional materials extracted from the exhibition context—such as technical drawings from the photocopy machine, a floorplan of the exhibition space, etc.—bounded them in identical office folders, and placed each one of them on a Minimalist-looking pedestal/sculpture. Notions of originality, authorship, medium specificity and representation were structurally disrupted by this ironical and subtle referential display.



Mel Bochner, *Language is Not Transparent*, 1970. Installation view at Villa Arson, Nice in the exhibition *Double Bind, Arrêtez d'essayer de me comprendre*, 2010.

At the end of the 1960s, a moment when the dominant art movements were in competition, Mel Bochner's work deconstructed each of the premises upon which these movements had built their beliefs. This approach culminated in *Language is Not Transparent* (1970). This paradoxical sentence—which ironizes Conceptual art's conception for which language is more efficient to convey meanings—is written over a typically rigorous Minimalist black square that melts from the bottom through brushstrokes inauthentically realized with the emblematic Abstract Expressionist gesture. Mel Bochner has always been interested in the heterogeneity of cultural productions and circulation, among which, pop culture. The idea of placing in *Art Magazine*, in 1967, a text/artwork on The Beach Boys was unprecedentedly irreverent. Fully arranged with quotes borrowed from fan magazines, this piece is a dazzling commentary on what the Pop art phenomenon could mean in terms of cultural twist and as critique of the standardization of both mass consumption and self-proclaimed "high culture."

Once Mel Bochner responded positively to the invitation to participate in the *Collector's Edition Box*, he immediately showed up on Skype with a *Laughing Cow* vintage mug he had bought in the 1990s in Tribeca's flea market and said: "*The Laughing Cow*® is the Pop art incarnation of the *Mona Lisa*." Each time he was using his mug, it reminded him of how enigmatic the smile was.

During the conversations about his design for the box, he repeatedly referred to Pop art. Whether it was about the color, the font or the image, the work he would imagine in the context of a mass-produced cheese box had to be visually strong and catchy. Though Pop art has never been a direct source of influence for his work, this artistic reference made sense for this project, since his art practice has consistently paid attention to the context in which the work takes place. In this instance, the context is a cheese product with a worldwide famous logo of a cow. Of course, Pop art was generated as an ambivalent critique of mass consumption, and therefore making a work in this context could not avoid a Pop art reference, especially after Andy Warhol's cow heads and Roy Lichtenstein's use of comics onomatopoeias.



Mel Bochner, *Meaningless* 2003

Bochner's works are not so much site specific but rather culturally-context sensitive. He uses languages as they exist on a support and always in a particular context. Reacting to the outburst of unrepressed speech in the public space via mobile phones and social networks, his paintings based on the semantic association system of the *Thesaurus* dictionary took a more vindictive turn in 2003. These paintings, drawings on canvas and paper or directly printed on architectural supports use a specific kind of language that reflects the always more ferocious, raw and mean expressions that were spread around the media flux. These strong, succinct statements and tropisms that "pop into one's head" are aimed to be literal and direct; however, as soon as Bochner uses them in the picture frame, sometimes assembled according to semantic associations, they reveal themselves to be strangely ambiguous and paradoxical. Among them, the insult "Do I have to draw you a picture" deviates as soon as it moves from the Twitter to an actual painting. Referring to these works, he said: "We live in a world that is oversaturated with empty language—small talk, tweets, texts, leet speak, chit-chat, pop-up ads, telephone-answering messages ('your call is important to us...'), warnings on medicine bottles ('if you have an erection lasting more than four hours...'). If there is no escaping this linguistic tsunami, the 'Blah, Blah, Blah' paintings subvert it from



below.”<sup>3</sup> He sees his work as “a comment on the whole situation of modern life, the barrage of bullshit that is always coming at us. ... It’s the same in politics. It’s just a condition in which we live, and this is my resistance.”<sup>4</sup> The progressive decomposition of language culminates at the end of the painting *Meaningless* with the borborigma Blahblahblah which will be the subject of a series presenting reiterations of the four letters. In a subsequent series, he keeps only the last two letters, inverting them: ha, the expression of laughter whose meanings are potentially endless. Bochner wonders: how can an artwork laugh?

These works are not only playing with words but also with colors that induce emotional subtexts. With them, one can examine how words and ideas are conveyed and how unexpectedly complex meanings can hide in apparently simple statements. This consciousness emerges from the unpredicted relationships he organizes between words, their tones, the effects generated by their size, forms and colors, as well as the context in which they are placed.



Mel Bochner, *Do I have to Draw you a Picture?*  
2013



Mel Bochner, *HA, HA, HA*  
2015

<sup>3</sup> Mel Bochner, *Strong Language*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt, The Jewish Museum, Yale University Press, 2014

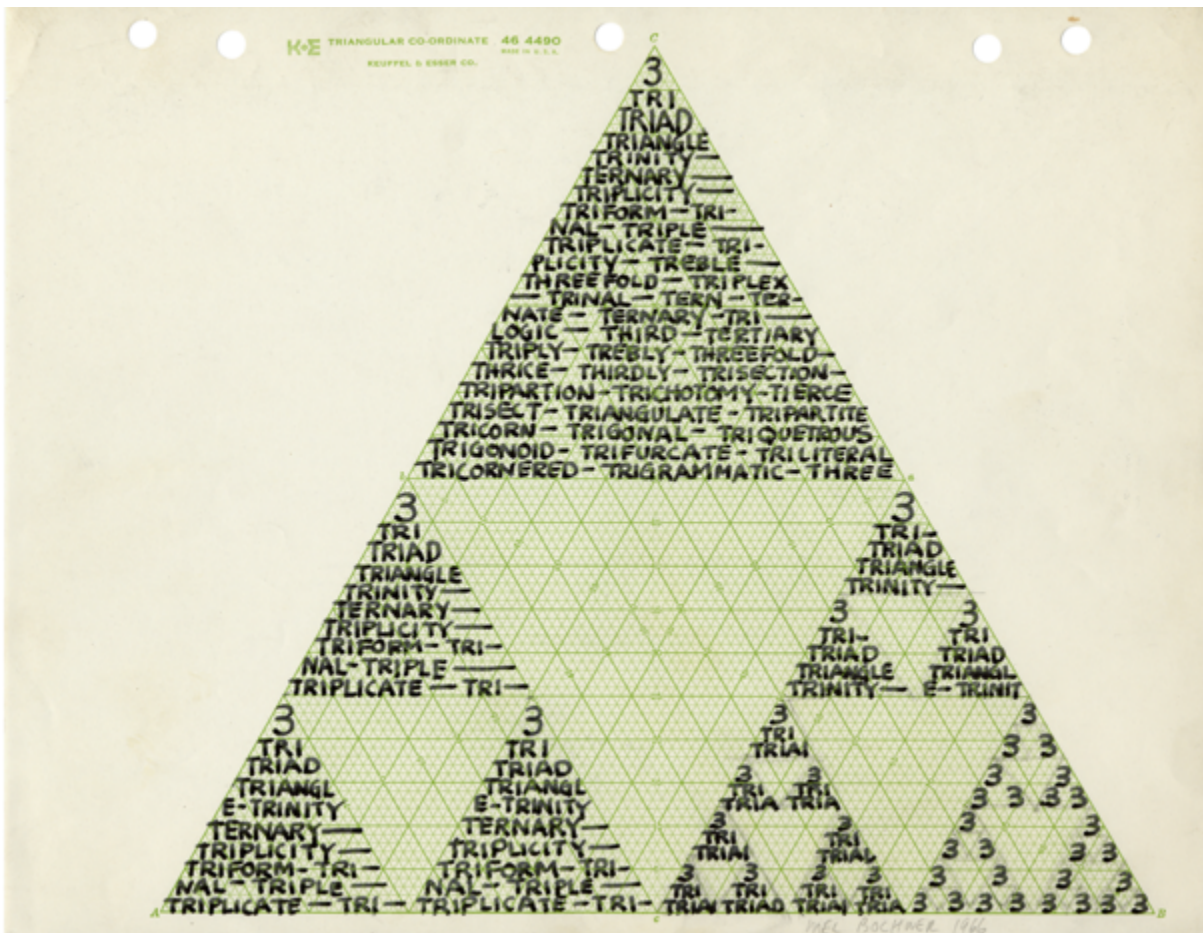
<sup>4</sup> Mel Bochner, Interview for La Jolla Light Journal, 2015.

"In the world of advertising, there is no such thing as a lie, Maggie. There is only expedient exaggeration."

Roger Thornhill to his assistant in the film *North by Northwest*, Alfred Hitchcock, 1959.

The work Mel Bochner proposed for the *Collector's Edition Box* simplifies the existing design. He removed entirely the background, the landscape, the sky and the stripes to emphasize the already existing famous cow head and the title *La Vache qui rit*<sup>®</sup>. To this, he added HA HA HA HA—the onomatopoeia for laughing—and scattered them all over the field of representation in different sizes, extending some HA almost beyond the surface's edges. He produced two versions of the box: one with a blue cow on a red background and the other with a red cow on a blue background. Inside the box, on the aluminum packaging of the cheese, he added some red and blue stickers, over which HA + H or HA + A are printed. Mel Bochner's design for the *Collector's Edition Box* focuses on the enigmatic laughing and its various ways of appearing and signifying through textual means and the changing colors.

What does the adding of HA HA HA HA entail? The title and the image are already repetitious in the existing design but adding the onomatopoeia could be considered as a redundant exaggeration. Yet, this gesture is not so much an addition but rather a deconstruction of how these signifiers acquire meanings. Already one of his earlier works from 1966, a drawing soberly entitled 3, is generating a variety of expressions of what a simple "3" could entail: various scales of the number, different geometrical triad figures intertwined, discursive words of the number 3. Bochner questions how one ordinary thing like the number 3, or a smile, can be translated and what it means as soon as it takes another form, support or semiotic system.



Mel Bochner, 3, 1966

Undeniably, the smile of the cow is more than a mystery and, since the invention of the logo, Bel has constantly changed its design by modifying the potential feelings it conveys through the manipulation of the features composing the head, the eyes, the mouth, the ears and the horns. Beyond the obvious reason according to which advertising a laughing cow is more optimistic than a crying one, one could wonder why is this cow indeed laughing? And Bochner's chromatic and formal manipulations allow us to question this enigma. Is her smile or her laugh a way to disseminate joy? Is she happy about something? Is it a reaction to something specific? Is she laughing at a joke: at the astounding vision of the customer chewing the cheese? Are we laughing together about someone else? Is this something she is doing in order to repress some kind of sadness... Are there so many reasons to laugh at since its invention in 1921, during the interwar years?

Concerning his paintings using various semiotic signs like colors and text Bochner says: "I am interested in translation from the verbal to the visual. What is the difference between looking at a painting and reading it? The coloraturas divert the text from its duty to meaning. But coloraturas also create a visual meaning, one that survives the consumption of the narrative."

Indeed, not only each HA Bochner designed for the box has a different size, but the design plays with the two variable colors of the figure of the cow and the background. Therefore, we can experience the different tones that can be given to the various meanings or "colors" of laughing. Some Ha can convey joy, sympathy or compassion; others **HAHAHA** can contain the vulgarity of a too-loud intentional or simulated laugh ; some HA can be seen as inauthentic laughs—"yellow laughs," as we say in French; some may be laughs that laugh at themselves or others; some could be pretentious laughs that underline how one's humor; some small HAHAHA may look like resigned or shameful smiles. One could also play with the cheese servings and compose their own long HHHHHAAAAAA or awkward sequences of HA AH HHHH AAAA. Furthermore, each interpretation of HAHABA can flip according to its variation in red or blue.

How to translate the complexity of feelings coming from an image, a color or a word, knowing how much small intonations, subtle hues and tiny facial details can make a smile turn from joy to danger? When talking about his series of paintings *HAHAHA*, which associates large written repetitions of the two letters in various strong colors, Mel Bochner remembers the scene in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* in which friendly hilarious laughs turn into a death sentence. Ray Liotta tells Joe Pesci that he is funny, but "Funny how?" threatens Pesci. "Funny-stupid or funny-funny?" he inquires. Is he making others laugh or are others laughing at him? Bochner's display of laughter asks: what are the subjects that can lend themselves to laughter or provoke it? With the *Collector's Edition Box*, we indeed wonder who is laughing: the cow, the public, the company, or all at the same time?

Spreading the differently formatted HA onomatopoeias all over the box generates a depth of field where the laugh seems to come from everywhere, including from outside the box. The figural (image), the discursive (text) and the somatic expressions of the sound are gathered in the same image as an overall semiotic crowded space. Advertising's goal is often directed towards enhancing the message, yet Bochner's formulation is actually more of a way to analyze the semiotic differences between these various signs. Even if the intention is to carry similar feelings or ideas, they remain different. But different how and why? It brings us to identify the differences between these three signifiers and how they translate various ways of experiencing and understanding laughing. An onomatopoeia is a formation of a word whose sound imitates the thing it means. In this sense, it differs from the ordinary language that is based on the arbitrary relations between the signifier and the signified. Considered as a regressive way to express feelings of phenomena, onomatopoeias are culturally constructed. As an example, some sixteenth century erudite believing in language concordances searched for the origin of Greek in the Hebraic language, whose phonemes were supposed to derive from the sounds of nature. According to this theory, onomatopoeia is the authentic and natural origin of language. Therefore, the three demonstrations of laughter do not coincide: the textual is grounded in the realm of the rational and articulated thought; the onomatopoeia supposedly comes from an adamic language which is hypothetically transparent; and the somatic expression of laughter (the image) is culturally seen as being the more instinctual and therefore authentic. Yet recent discoveries refute the certainties of these social codes associated with emotions. For example, expressions of joy or sadness in the Middle Ages have long been described as childish, shifting from laughter to excessive tears. However, historians specialized in affects demonstrated that far from being immature, emotions were, on the contrary, highly codified, over-determined and calculated in a very

strategic way. Therefore, what could be identified as authentic somatic expressions were in fact very rational and codified ways to interact.

Mel Bochner's work for the *Collector's Edition Box* speculates on these subtle differences as a way to contradict the stereotypes associated to simple oppositions between rational and emotional: image, text and color.

The various aspects of the work he did for *The Laughing Cow*® converge on an enigma that refutes the tautology: "She is smiling because she is smiling." This circular statement with no verifiable reason self-validates itself and diminishes the possibilities of interpretation. On the contrary, Mel Bochner's work for the *Collector's Edition Box* multiplies singularities towards something like a circularity within all these synonymous smiles. Similar yet different expressions of laughter that challenge the tautology of smiles: a smiling cow produces a better milk, and a better milk produces a better cheese, and a better cheese produces a smiling person, who is smiling in front of a smiling cow. But each smile is different.

Sébastien Pluot

Curator of the *Collector's Edition Boxes* – Mel Bochner 2020

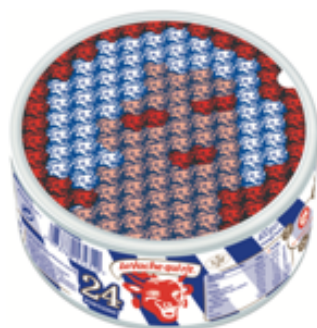
## The Collector's Edition Boxes collection



HANS-PETER FELDMANN



WIM DELVOYE



THOMAS BAYRLE



KARIN SANDER



JONATHAN MONK



DANIEL BUREN



MEL BOCHNER





## *The Laughing Cow*® and the arts

When Léon Bel created *The Laughing Cow*® in 1921, he had yet to entrust the brand's visual identity to Benjamin Rabier. It was not until 1923, following a competition intended to give the brand more visibility and attractiveness, that Rabier's famous image began to appear on *The Laughing Cow*® labels.

From that point forward, the two men engaged in a collaboration that would continue until long after the artist's death in 1939, as evidenced by the publication, in the 1950s, of albums filled with his joyous images of animals.

Although this partnership remains the most famous of *The Laughing Cow*® collaborations, the creative advertising management of the Bel Group has also called upon other illustrators. At various times, Luc-Marie Bayle, Corinne Baille, Hervé Baille, Paul Grimault and Albert Dubout have each brought their creativity to the conception of different

gifts destined for young consumers. In 1954, Alain Saint-Ogan

took *The Laughing Cow*® to an animal's paradise – *Au Paradis des Animaux* – both through his famous illustrated albums and through the eponymous radio show. This promotional tradition continued to evolve, taking on many different forms, as in the 1970s when Jacques Parnel infamously created a version of the cow who wore clothes and walked on her two hind legs. At the same time, the brand's image has been a continuous source of creative inspiration for numerous artists: already in 1929, painter Marcel Lenoir placed a box of *The Laughing Cow*® at the center of his *Still Life*.

Perhaps the most notable representation of *The Laughing Cow*® is that of Bernard Rancillac, who in his 1966 painting *Our Holy Mother The Cow* depicted the brand's famous icon as the sun in the sky. In his own words, this emblematic artist of the Narrative Figuration movement had wanted to portray an image that was at once a symbol of Western consumerism and a reminder of the restrictions of Hinduism. In 2005, Belgian artist Wim Delvoye returned to this theme with his impressive collection of *The Laughing Cow*® labels, which he submitted to the Lyon Biennale. The reference to Darwin in the title of Delvoye's submission – *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* – is an audacious comment on the association between art history and marketing strategies.

In keeping with this two-directional movement of collaboration and appropriation, it is only natural that the brand's image should continue to be revisited and reinterpreted by artists. And this is exactly what *The Laughing Cow*® proposes in its series of *Collector's Edition Boxes*: year after year, leading artists are given complete creative freedom to transform the look of the classic 24 – portion box – an homage to the brand's playful, offbeat image.

Laurent Fiévet  
Director of Lab'Bel,  
The Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group

## Jalons chronologiques

1923

Illustrator Benjamin Rabier proposes his new *The Laughing Cow*® design to Léon Bel, which will be featured the following year on all of the brand's boxes. The label includes the same characteristics that mark the brand's success today: the famous laugh, certainly, but also the cow's earrings, red coloring and mischievous gaze. The design is chosen over that of Francisque Poulbot, whose work had also been solicited by Léon Bel. Still, both artists continue to work with Bel Group over the course of several years, and their designs can still today be found on numerous newsletters and advertisements from the era.

C. 1929

Painter Marcel Lenoir creates a *Still Life* with a *Laughing Cow*® box at its center, an early example of the brand's recognition among artists.

1950

The Bel Group begins its collaboration with Alain Saint-Ogan. The partnership will give rise to numerous advertisements created by the artist, from notebook covers to blotting paper and even a series of ten children's comic books, entitled *La Vache qui rit au Paradis des Animaux*.

1966

The painter Bernard Rancillac, head of the Narrative Figuration movement, composes a work entitled *Our Holy Mother the Cow* featuring a woman, child and donkey carrying jars across a parched desert beneath a burning sun, which features, at its center, a box of *The Laughing Cow*®. In 1985 Rancillac will complete a reproduction of this work, to be affixed directly to the box.

1967

Thomas Bayrle creates several "superforms" based on *The Laughing Cow*® logo. The first of these, *Mädchen/Fille/Girl*, will be the inspiration for the 2015 *Collector's Edition Box* more than half a century later.

1968

Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers uses *The Laughing Cow*® in one of his editions at the Wide White Space gallery in Antwerp.

Broodthaers' *The Laughing Cow*® is composed of eight boxes upon which the artist writes the phrases *I love you, a little, a lot, passionately, madly, not at all*.

1971

For its new advertising campaign, Bel Group calls upon Jacques Parnel, who accepts the challenge of creating a more down-to-earth *Laughing Cow*®, variously depicted in a dress, blue jeans, or diverse regional costumes.

1975

Graphic designer and typographer Albert Hollenstein creates a round greetings card directly inspired by *The Laughing Cow*® but featuring a *Laughing Lady*. The card echoes the shape of the box, and features the brand's iconic blue background and white stars in addition to a red face and white horns.

1985

To promote the brand, the Bel Group calls upon André Franquin to create a promotional album. The album's cover features Franquin's famous character Gaston Lagaffe wearing two earrings identical to those worn by *The Laughing Cow*®.

2005

Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, a long-time collector of *Laughing Cow*® themed objects, presents his installation *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* at the International Biennale of Contemporary Art in Lyon. The work is composed of more than 4,000 *Laughing Cow*® labels.

2010

Lab'Bel, the artistic laboratory of the Bel Group, is created. REWIND, the laboratory's first exhibition, is inaugurated in the spring of 2010 at La Maison de La Vache qui rit (Lons-le-Saunier, Jura).

2014

At the initiative of Lab'Bel, the Bel Group launches its series of *Collector's Edition Boxes*. The design for the first edition in the series is entrusted to German conceptual artist Hans-Peter Feldmann.

## 2015

The second *Collector's Edition Box* is designed by Thomas Bayrle, inspired by *Mädchen/Fille/Girl*, his 1967 "superform" that prominently features *The Laughing Cow*® logo.

## 2016

The design of the third *Collector's Edition Box* is entrusted to British conceptual artist Jonathan Monk. For the first time, the *Collector's Edition Box* is presented at a booth specially dedicated to the project at Paris' international contemporary art fair, FIAC.

## 2017

Belgian artist Wim Delvoye designs the fourth *Collector's Edition Box*. For the second year in a row, the box is presented at FIAC, at a special booth resembling a miniature carnival.

In her first solo exhibition at the Almine Rech Gallery in Paris, artist Chloe Wise presents *The Laughing Cow*® in various forms, including sculptures, installations, and figurative paintings.

## 2018

German conceptual artist Karin Sander designs the fifth *Collector's Edition Box*, once again to be presented at *The Laughing Cow*® booth at FIAC.

## 2019

After having been abandoned in 2012 due to technical difficulties related to its production, the project conceived by Daniel Buren for the inaugural series of *Collector's Edition Boxes* finally comes to fruition. For the first time in its history, the *Collector's Edition Box* is available in four different colour combinations (blue, yellow, red, green) which are simultaneously made available to collectors. They will be previewed to collectors at the FIAC in an installation specially designed by the artist for the project.

## 2020

Mel Bochner is the seventh artist to create a *Collector's Edition Box*. It is available in two versions, playing on an alternating colour effect.

# Key numbers

## In France:

- > For generations, *The Laughing Cow*® has been the number one cheese among children (source Nielsen CAM P6 2019 / PDM volume)
- > 93% of children between the ages of 7 and 12 and 94% of mothers know the brand (source Tracking Enfants IFOP April 2019 / Tracking Millward Brown 2017)
- > Nearly 1 out of families with children under the age of 15 purchase *The Laughing Cow*® (source Nielsen / CAM P6 2019)
- > Over one million Facebook fans (September 2019)

## Around the world:

- Ranked fourth in the world in brand cheeses (source Bel)
- 10 million portions sold each day (source Bel)
- Available in 136 countries on 5 continents (source Bel)

# About Lab'Bel, the Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group

Lab'Bel was created in the spring of 2010 to support contemporary art. The activities of this laboratory of ideas and impertinent innovation are shared between the development of a contemporary art collection – now on long-term loan at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Dole – and the organization of exhibitions and artistic events throughout France and Europe. Lab'Bel is also behind a series of performative multidisciplinary projects ranging from modernist architecture to poetry or music.

In parallel, Lab'Bel is responsible for a number of publications and artist's editions, including for example *The Laughing Cow® Collector's Edition Box®*, created every year by a different contemporary artist, in close collaboration with the Bel team, giving rise to a range of research and experimentation.

Laurent Fiévet and Silvia Guerra act as director and artistic director, respectively.

More info at: [www.lab-bel.com](http://www.lab-bel.com)

## Contacts

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