

« Être original est presque impossible. »



“Being original is almost impossible.”

PRESS KIT

The Laughing Cow® continues to prepare for its 100th anniversary in 2021 with a third

Collector's Edition Box by artist

Jonathan Monk.

The Collector's Edition Boxes: Sharing Contemporary Art

The Laughing Cow® (La Vache qui rit®) is more than a smile and good humor: it's an incredible story of innovation and creativity. That's why in 2014 the company launched an impressive series of collaborations with major contemporary artists, each of whom will design a not-to-be-missed *Collector's Edition Box* in celebration of the brand's 100th anniversary in 2021. These collaborations continue the special rapport that has always existed between The Laughing Cow® and the artists who have used this modern icon as a source of inspiration for nearly a century.

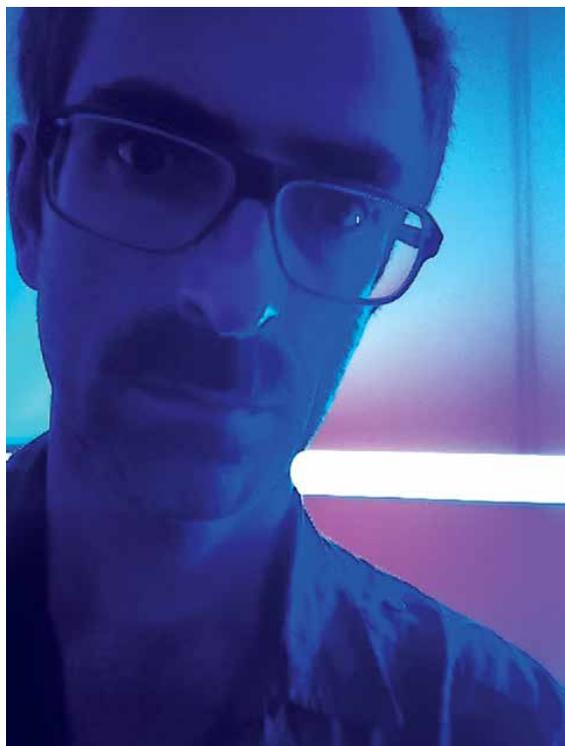
Each *Collector's Edition Box* is an original work of art in its own right, made available to thousands of consumers and collectors at the standard retail price.

Once on sale, the Collector's Edition Boxes will present consumers with a choice: to eat the contents (the natural thing to do) or to leave them unopened, both for their aesthetic value and because each box is a work of contemporary art by an internationally renowned artist.

By bringing contemporary art to the broadest audience possible in a way that's both original and offbeat, the *Collector's Edition Box* project epitomizes the philosophy of Lab'Bel, the artistic laboratory of the Bel Group created in 2010.



Jonathan Monk's Collector's Edition Box



Following Hans-Peter Feldmann in 2014 and Thomas Bayrle in 2015, it's now the turn of British artist Jonathan Monk to create the 3rd *Collector's Edition Box* for The Laughing Cow® in 2016.

Born in Leicester in 1969, Jonathan Monk lives and works in Berlin. In his art, he revisits and "re-plays" iconic 20th century artworks with a touch of wit and irony.

Speaking in 2009, he defined his approach: "The process of appropriation is something that I've evoked and used in my work since my studies in 1987. At that time (and still today), I realized that being original was nearly impossible, so I tried to use what already existed as a source for my work."

Through murals, monochrome, ephemeral sculptures or photographs, Jonathan Monk reflects the trend of contemporary art to draw on existing references while paying tribute to great figures such as Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha, Bruce Nauman and Lawrence Weiner. In so doing, he explores questions about the process of creation.

Jonathan Monk's work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions. Solo exhibitions include the Kunsthaus Baseland in Basel (2016), the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland (2014), the Centro De Arte Contemporáneo (CAC) Málaga (2013), Kunstraum Dornbirn, Austria (2013), Palais de Tokyo and the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris (2008), the Kunstverein Hannover (2006), the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2005) and the Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf (2003). Group exhibitions include Manifesta 11 - European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Zürich (2016), the Whitney Biennial (2006), the 50th and 53rd Venice Biennales (2003, 2009), the Berlin Biennale (2001) and the Taipei Biennial (2000).

Jonathan Monk was awarded the Prix du Quartier Des Bains, Geneva in 2012. He is represented in London by the Lisson Gallery, in Saint-Ouen by the Untilthen Gallery, and in Brussels and Tel Aviv by the Dvir Gallery.

A mini-supermarket at the FIAC



During the 2016 edition of the FIAC in Paris (20 - 23 October), Lab'Bel will unveil Jonathan Monk's *Collector's Edition Box* in a space designed in collaboration with the artist to resemble a mini-supermarket. Collectors and contemporary art lovers will be able to acquire what will surely be one of the least expensive artworks at the fair.

To mark the occasion Lab'Bel will present a new film portrait of Jonathan Monk directed by François Prodromidès, following the first two devoted to Hans-Peter Feldmann and Thomas Bayle*.

A meeting focusing on the *Collector's Edition Box* will also take place in the presence of the artist and curator Michael Staab on 20 October at 1:00 pm, as part of the fair's VIP program.

*These films are viewable on Lab'Bel's website: www.lab-bel.com.

Dates to remember during the 2016 FIAC



Wednesday 19 October from 2pm to 5pm:

Press opening. A *Collector's Edition Box* will be available for each journalist who requests one

Thursday 20 October at 1pm

Meeting with Jonathan Monk and Michael Staab

Where to find Jonathan Monk's *Collector's Edition Box*

The Lafayette Gourmet / Galeries Lafayette Network

As with the previous edition, the *Collector's Edition Box* will go on sale in October across France and Germany in stores from the Lafayette Gourmet / Galeries Lafayette network

Visit www.lab-bel.com to stay informed about distribution dates and points of sale.

PARIS

Lafayette Gourmet : 35 bd Haussmann Paris 9ème
BHV/Marais rivoli : 52 Rue de Rivoli Paris 4ème

BERLIN

Galeries Lafayette : Friedrichstraße 76-78, Berlin

MARSEILLE

Galeries Lafayette : 28 rue Bir Hakeim, Centre commercial Bourse, Marseille 1er

SAINT LAURENT DU VAR

CAP 3000 : Centre commercial Cap 3000, Quartier du Lac

CURATOR'S TEXT BY MICHAEL STAAB

Jonathan Monk. Combining the obvious with the abstract.

Being original is almost impossible - In his work, British artist Jonathan Monk often uses works and design concepts by other well-known artists. While still a student at the Glasgow School of Art, he recognized that *appropriation* was a possible approach to his own pictorial composition. In the great canon of modern and contemporary art, it seemed to him that to develop even more originality was well-nigh impossible; so he continues to draw on already available artistic source material, using it as a basis for his own work.

A photo book by Ed Ruscha becomes the protagonist in a video, a Jeff Koons-style stainless steel sculpture transmutes into various forms, a minimalistic piece of writing in the style of Pierre Huyghe changes its message, and a music video of Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* appears in a different perspective. These are only a few examples from his many years of praxis.



At first glance, one might misunderstand the conceptual approach of *appropriation* as a mere act of interpretation, the result of which could be at best mischievous homages, ironic reminiscences or intellectual reference accumulations. But Jonathan Monk's artistic approach is far more complex. He does not simply take over the forms created by other artists, but incorporates into his free transformations his own and our acquired views on creative art. He stays close to the original artwork, while availing himself freely of its forms, materials, and design concept. Thus he manages to demystify our internalised notions of originality, uniqueness, creative art and its significance, making room for new perspectives and associations from familiar contexts. There is no iconoclasm in Monk's work, since the originals retain their form, message and meaning intact. Only in the context of the exhibition do his reformulations evolve their whole subversive, sometimes perfidious effect, when perceptions proliferate in the mind of the viewer.

CURATOR'S TEXT BY MICHAEL STAAB

Jonathan Monk and the 2016 *La Vache qui rit*[®] Collector Box

What next? This is the question he asks himself before and after each artwork. Here it is not a work by a fellow-artist that Jonathan Monk has appropriated, but a different "original", the famous French brand *La Vache qui Rit*[®]. This trade-mark - a laughing cow with cheese-box earrings - has developed continuously over the decades, while remaining original and readily recognizable. By the addition of a stunningly simple technical alteration, Jonathan Monk succeeds in presenting a different perspective on this familiar image with no intervention by pencil or paintbrush, or alteration of the original form or message.

Sometimes we forget the obvious - At the request of the artist, the label on one batch of the cheese-boxes manufactured in autumn 2016 will be inverted, during the industrial production process. The cow is now looking in the other direction, and all the other product information is back to front. Holding the familiar product, we realise that something is different. But what? Obviously, the text is back to front, but what about the cow? Which way does it usually look - from left to right, or from right to left? Does it always look at us so roguishly, or is that just the effect of the change of direction?

The original is so familiar that we no longer look at it properly. One result of Monk's intervention is that we look again, more closely, and both product and art form become visible. Here the artistic resource is the alteration mechanism itself, and the resulting image is merely the visible outward form. The artist's complete and automatic inversion of the label eliminates any recognizable personal evaluation of the individual elements; no individual artistic signature can be distinguished. The perplexity occasioned in an everyday context is more important to him than the obvious perception as a work of art.

Through his direct intervention in a strictly controlled production process, Monk has transformed a mass-produced article - always identical and manufactured to the highest industrial standard - into a distinctive collector's piece. We all have a weakness for the exceptional, so we like to collect it when we come across it - whether it is a four-leafed clover, an unusual stone or a postage stamp error. So this box with the inverted label will be appreciated and preserved as something special because of its distinctiveness, even if the artistic background is not known.

CURATOR'S TEXT BY MICHAEL STAAB

It's the inside that matters

In the *Collector's Edition Box* project series, the industrial production hall replaces the artist's studio as a mystical place, the graphics department, the machine park and the factory workers carry out the craftwork, and the work comes alive, not through being unique, but through appearing within a mass of original references. Every single box is an independent part of a total artwork, to be found in the food retail sector for the same price as the original cheese-box. Thus - after Hans Peter Feldmann in 2014 and Thomas Bayrle in 2015 - in 2016 Jonathan Monk will be the best-selling artist for a certain period of time - while also being the cheapest. For a few coins, you can rise from the status of mere viewer of works displayed in museums and galleries to that of proprietor of an original. Now art exhibition and art criticism take place at home on the kitchen table.

It's the inside that matters - This applies particularly to conceptual art, where the basic idea and the emerging thought associations are more important than the work itself. This approach, less sensory and visual, more intellectual, makes many conceptual artworks seem forbidding and unapproachable. In conjunction with the natural charm of the laughing cow, Jonathan Monk has nevertheless succeeded, with his *Collector's Edition Box*, in combining the obvious with the abstract - the visible image and the superordinate idea - in an excellent, simple, intelligent and above all humorous fashion. *Sharing smiles.*

MICHAEL STAAB is a german theater director, conceptual artist and independent curator. Born in 1962 in Esslingen, Germany, he lives and works in Cologne.

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 Fromageries Bel 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 at the same time 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 favored 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 artists. And this is precisely what the collector's edition series offers, asking each artist to interpret the box of 24 portions according to his or her own irreverent and offbeat manner.

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: humor of course, but also the color 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 from the period.



c.1929

In a sign of the brand's early recognition, Marcel Lenoir 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.

1967

Thomas Bayrle creates his first series of *superforms* based on the *Laughing Cow*® logo. The first of these, *Mädchen/Fille/Girl*, served as the basis for the brand's second *Collector's Edition Box* in 2015.

1968

Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers uses the *Laughing Cow*® box for an exhibition in his gallery Wide White Space in Antwerp. Broodthaers' *The Laughing Cow*® is composed of eight boxes in which the artist wrote the phrases *Je vous aime, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, à la folie, pas du tout* (the French version of "He loves me, he loves me not") next to his signature "MB68" and photographic reproductions of letters.

1971

Bel Cheese invites Jacques Parnel to participate in its new advertising campaign. Parnel 'dares' to represent *The Laughing Cow*® standing upright and clothed differently: 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.

2010

Creation of Lab'Bel, the artistic laboratory of the Bel Group. *Rewind*, the laboratory's first exhibition, opens at La Maison de La Vache qui rit® (Lons-le-Saunier, Jura) in the spring of that year.

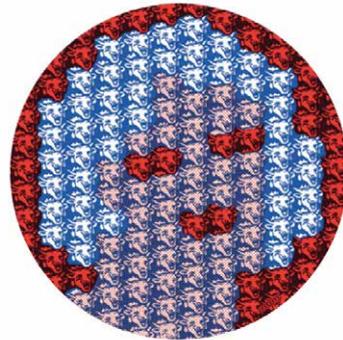
2014

At the initiative of Lab'Bel, the Bel Group inaugurates its *Collector's Edition Box* series with a design by German conceptual artist Hans-Peter Feldmann.



2015

The second installment in the *Collector's Edition Box* series, created by Thomas Bayrle on the basis of his 1967 work *Mädchen/Fille/Girl* - the artist's first *superform* to make use of the *Laughing Cow*® logo.



2016

The creation of the third *Collector's Edition Box* is entrusted to British conceptual artist Jonathan Monk (b. 1969, lives and works in Berlin).



Lab'Bel, the Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group



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 humor, 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 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 centers 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 Brüggemann 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. 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* established a bridge between poetry, music and the visual arts. It was followed in the autumn of 2013 by *Metaphoria II*, staged in Athens in the context of the Biennale REMAP, Contemporary Art Platform.



Metaphoria II, Athènes/ Athens, 2013 Remap Biennial.
photo crédits: Nikos Kokkas

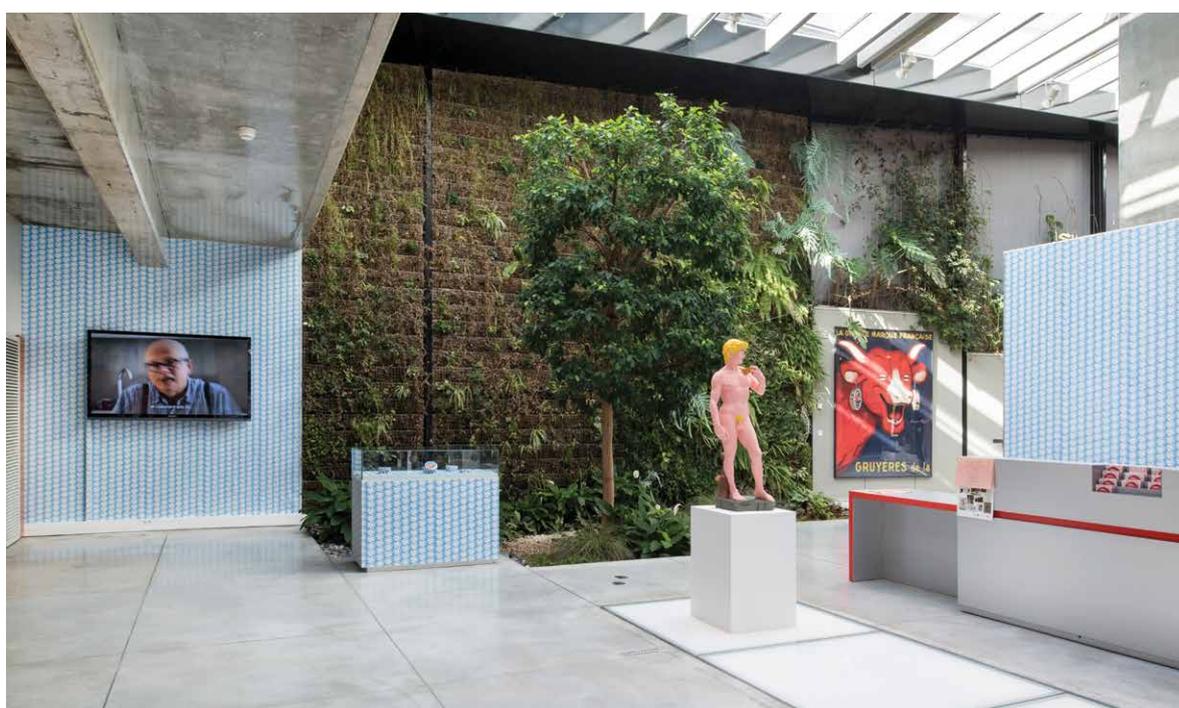
In 2015 Lab'Bel was the impetus behind *Concertino Unisono*, a performance conceptualized by German artist Michael Staab that took place in the Piazza San Marco during the opening of the 56th Venice Biennale. Commissioned by Lab'Bel, *Concertino Unisono* was the first of 3 *Easy Pieces*, a series of performances destined for public spaces and commissioned to international artists.



Concertino Unisono / 3 Easy Pieces / Venice 2015
photo crédits: Maurizio Torresan

In the spring of 2016, playing off the title of one Marcel Duchamp's most famous works - *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* - Lab'Bel "exposed" its own collection by exhibiting it in three different places, all in the Jura: La Maison de La vache qui rit® (Lons-le-Saunier - from 19 February to 1 May 2016), the Museum of Fine Arts in Dole (from 18 March to 22 May 2016), and the beautiful garden of the Belvedere Calonne Sappel in Baume-les-Messieurs (weekends from 18 March to 30 September 2016).

For Lab'Bel, this "exposure", which followed the first presentation of the collection in Angers in 2012, presented recent acquisitions while raising questions about a contemporary art collection which, despite its modest number of works, already demonstrates an approach marked by humor, irreverence and impertinence.



La Collection mise à nu par ses artistes, même, 2016, MVQR, Lons-le-Saunier.
photo crédits: Martin Argyroglo.

The Laughing Cow® by the numbers:

The Laughing Cow® in France

For generations, *The Laughing Cow*® has been the **number one** cheese among children (source Nielsen / sales volume)

97% of children aged 7 to 12 and **94%** of mothers know the brand (source : Tracking Enfants IFOP November 2014 / Tracking Millward Brown 2015)

1 of every 2 families with children under 15 buy *The Laughing Cow*® (source Nielsen / CAM P6 2015)

1,100,000 fans on Facebook

The Laughing Cow® around the world

Number 3 among cheese brands worldwide (Étude Zénith International - Source Bel Global Cheese 2012)

400 million consumers across the globe (source Bel)

240 servings consumed per second (source Bel)

Images Credits

Jonathan Monk - Defated Sculpture I, 2009 Stainless steel- 71.1 x 73.7 x 39.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery Photography: Ken Adlard

Jonathan Monk

Do Not Pay More Than \$60,000, 2009 Neon
40 x 70 cm

Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery Photography: Dave Morgan

Jonathan Monk

Senza Titolo VIII, 2012

Jesmonite bust with nose broken by Maurizio Cattelan Bust: 45.5 x 21 x 26 cm,
base: 150 x 50 x 50 cm Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery
Photography: Jack Hems

Self-Portrait Jonathan Monk
©Jonathan Monk

Collector Boxes

Collector Box Hans-Peter Feldmann ©GroupeBel-Hans-Peter Feldmann,2014

Collector Box Thomas Bayrle ©GroupeBel-Thomas Bayrle ,2015

Collector Box Jonathan Monk ©GroupeBel-Jonathan Monk ,2016

MEDIA RELATIONS

FOUCHARD FILIPPI COMMUNICATIONS

Philippe Fouchard Filippi

info@fouchardfilippi.com

+33 (0)1 53 28 87 53

+33 (0)6 60 21 11 94