

Badge of Quality Corporation

Following is a description of THE BADGE OF QUALITY CORPORATION: The Badge of Quality Corporation is an exploration of corporate enterprise in the context of art.

Corporate purpose

To make a profit by selling pieces of Mr. Milk Bottle's action to clients.

Mr. Milk Bottle's Action

Mr. Milk Bottle's action consists not only of his physical image and its graphic representation, but his character as revealed through time as contained in the narrative of his life, THE ADVENTURES OF MR. MILK BOTTLE.

Let's say there are 392 pieces of Mr. Milk Bottle's action currently (but more may come into existence, though not without limit). Each work of art is one piece of action:

THE ADVENTURES OF MR. MILK BOTTLE (print series)	200 pieces
THE BIG CARTOON SERIES (print series)	140 pieces
MR. MILK BOTTLE BLOWS HIS TOP	20 pieces
MR. MILK BOTTLE'S ACTING STYLE	20 pieces
MR. MILK BOTTLE GETS INTO ADVERTISING	3 pieces
MR. MILK BOTTLE AFTER HIS ADVENTURE WITH THE STEAM ROLLER	3 pieces
MR. MILK BOTTLE AND THE EVIL RED BASEBALL	3 pieces
THREE ONE-OF-A-KIND SCULPTURES	1 piece each

That is, there are 10 prints in THE ADVENTURES OF MR. MILK BOTTLE, and each print is limited to an edition of 20. Each sculpture is limited to an edition of 3, with the exceptions of the 3 one-of-a-kind sculptures. When an investor buys a Piece of Mr. Milk Bottle's Action, what is sold is a certificate, signed by myself certifying that the bearer owns "X number of pieces" of Mr. Milk Bottle's Action. The Piece of Action certificate demands close examination because it links the horrible accident that befell Mr. Milk Bottle After His Adventure with the Steamroller to his subsequent re-embodiment as the face of the Badge of Quality Corporation as well as linking this transformation to the symbolic act of investing in art in hopes of future profits. The art that comes with the certificate is complimentary.

Officers of the Corporation

Mr. Milk Bottle is the Corporate Celebrity Host and Master of Ceremonies. Fred Truck is Badge of Quality CEO. The gallery owner and staff thereby become agents of The Badge of Quality Corporation.

Corporate divisions of The Badge of Quality Corporation

1. **The Gadget Art Museum**--The Gadget Art Museum was founded when Mr. Milk Bottle saw himself in the hydrogen bomb. It is devoted to stockpiling art too powerful to use for any corporate purpose. Mr. Milk Bottle often greets art lovers as they come to the museum.
2. **Milk Bottle Town**--Milk Bottle Town is the focus of all the Badge of Quality's theme park enterprises, such as Milk Bottle Interactive (featuring virtual reality amusements such as DRIVE THE BASEBALL (in which the player tries to steer a careening baseball so it hits Mr. Milk Bottle, who of course, is spinning and trying to avoid being hit) and MR. MILK BOTTLE'S ROCKET NOSE CONE RIDE and MR. MILK BOTTLE IN THE BATTLE OF THE CIVIL WAR IRONCLADS, interactive computer games such as ASK MR. MILK BOTTLE, and the Badge of Quality Corporation's constantly evolving Web site), and Milk Bottle Personal, the corporate wing that books and supervises personal appearances by Mr. Milk Bottle (or one of his costumed representatives) both in Milk Bottle Town or at your place of business or public function.
3. **Badge of Quality Marketing and Communications**--This division controls all aspects of the corporate image visible by the public and is responsible for implementing our communications policies and editorial intent, including Milk Bottle TV (which owns wholly or in part, our cable television network, and our radio and print subsidiaries; Milk Bottle TV has recently launched Badge of Quality SPORTS which includes not only our cable sports network, but our professional baseball and hockey teams and our interests in the professional golf, tennis and racquetball tours. Football is not far off, sports fans!) Of course, The Badge of Quality Marketing and Communications flagship cable station, Milk Bottle News Net continues operating at full transmission power. Many of you have seen your favorite athlete wearing the BADGE OF QUALITY on his or her apparel. Naturally this promotion was initiated by BADGE OF QUALITY APPAREL, our athletic wear concern. In addition to carrying the BADGE on shorts, shoes, socks, t-shirts, baseball caps and athletic bags, our new line of Polo shirts features everyone's all-time favorite toon character, Mr. Milk Bottle, attractively embroidered on the pocket. Coming soon: Milk Bottle Jeans and the all purpose, heavy duty BADGE OF QUALITY BRIEFCASE for you power executives. Recently, at the suggestion of Mr. Milk Bottle, The Badge of Quality Marketing and Communications launched its first, private communications satellite enabling our world-wide chain of movie theatres to download movies and video from the stars rather

than ship it from outlet to outlet. It won't be long before all our video stores are linked in the same manner. Anything in our vast storehouse of movies or video, or an image of anything held in the GADGET ART MUSEUM's stockpile will be instantly available anywhere in the world. Children, of course, are less aware of these corporate activities than they are of the popular Milk Bottle Town merchandising outlets and all the Badge of Quality goods they dispense. The dreams of children have always been first in Mr. Milk Bottle's heart, so the Badge of Quality Corporation extends special care and energy in their direction. Our toys are tested, test marketed and retested before being sent to their new homes through our outlets. Weren't you a satisfied customer once?

Big Cartoon Series

I began this series with two very different things in mind. First, I wanted to explore icons from cartoons I saw on TV as a child. Chief among these was Disney's Silly Symphonies, and others of that time period I can't recall the names of.

I really have no idea why these cartoons stuck in my mind. As I remember it, they actually gave me the creeps, but somehow, certain things stuck with me. One was an entire city in a panic with the hero, running away from some impending disaster. Buildings and forks and watertowers were all fleeing. The watertowers had an advantage, because they had the longest legs, but to the annoyance of others fleeing, they spilled their water.

The Big Cartoon Series introduces a number of stock cartoon elements—Giant Yellow Shoes, Marching Fireplugs, Steam Whistles, and the Marching Cartoon Watertowers—and brings them all together. At this point, for some unknown reason, extreme paranoia breaks out as revealed in the next to last print, Big Cartoon Panic.

The last print, Time to Go, sets a new tone. It is based on a number of paintings by Watteau, all titled "Departure for the Isle of Cythera." This semi-mythological motif is realized by a troupe of Commedia del'Arte actors and actresses, the stock cartoon characters of their day. The troupe is leaving for the Island of Love. In a like manner, but with less sentiment and more edge, the characters of the Big Cartoon Series move silently across the yellow desert towards the Sun, ready for a better day.

The Adventures of Mr. Milk Bottle

Mr. Milk Bottle happened along at a time when I felt I had very few interesting ideas. Natural lows like this happen every so often, and after a while, you develop a way of dealing with them. My plan is to do one thing every day. It doesn't make a whole lot of difference what I do. I just have to do something.

At that particular time, for no particular reason, I thought to myself that I would do an animated milk bottle. I remembered a little frieze of animated characters—a bottle and a fork and a spoon—from a book of poetry I read a lot in the early 70s, so I thought I would try it. I had just completed the Big Cartoon Series, so I had the yellow shoes. I did a bottle, a red tongue and a giant nose easily, but the eyes were a problem. It took me three days to come up with the eyes, simple black rectangles.

Mr. Milk Bottle's design is heavily influenced by early 20th century animation, the school of rubber hose animation. Choices in his depiction were also made in regards to the contemporary concern with the artist's body in mind. I thought I would give Mr. Milk Bottle a very partial body. His hands and arms are not always there, for one thing.

The first work I did with Mr. Milk Bottle was "Ask Mr. Milk Bottle," an interactive computer animation. In this work, Mr. Milk Bottle claims to be able to answer any question put to him. Of course, he never knows anything, because he's a milk bottle. He has an incomplete mind. While it works as a spoof of artificial intelligence programs like the famous "Liza," this animation actually came about due to a real experience.

In 1988, Lorna and I went with our son, Ben, to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The first thing we did on arriving was go to the tropical bird island. There, Ben found a mynah bird sitting on a sign, which said the bird's name was George (?) and would answer any question put to it. Ben asked George what his name was and he said, "I don't know."

Character is the final element of Mr. Milk Bottle's makeup. With an incomplete body and an incomplete mind he is more like a child than an adult. But since he is about 150 years old, he is much more adult than you or I, even though he is given to exaggeration, can't hold a job, and acts out his burgeoning psyche on Hollywood's silver screen. It is these qualities that make him the ideal public face for the Badge of Quality Corporation, the giant entertainment corporation he performs for. But that's the subject of work that came after The Adventures of Mr. Milk Bottle and his completion as a corporate icon.

Character Sheets

These two prints, "Mr. Milk Bottle's Acting Style" and "Mr. Milk Bottle Blows His Top," are based on the model sheets developed by major animators like Disney and Warner during the 30s. These sheets showed various body positions a given character would assume to express emotions.

As further development of Mr. Milk Bottle's character, these models sheets are essential.

Mr. Milk Bottle's New Shoes

In the 1990s, Nike ran a series of innovative advertisements. These ads not only sold millions of athletic shoes to people who otherwise would have had no interest in them, not being athletes, but also firmly established the identity of the corporation. I thought the Badge of Quality Corporation should also be in the athletic shoe field, and who better to hawk their wares than Mr. Milk Bottle?

In this series of panels, Mr. Milk Bottle shows some youngsters his Badge of Quality shoes, but the last panel tells us that what is really being sold is identity, the corporate identity, the Badge that makes "Everything for the American way of life."

Design with Mr. Milk Bottle Series

This series focuses on a very unusual racing airplane from the 1930s called the Gee Bee Super Sportster. It was nicknamed the Flying Milk Bottle or the Flying Coke Bottle. It has long been a favorite of aviation racing buffs because of its design, because of its unlucky and bloody history, and because General Jimmy Doolittle, the much-loved WWII hero, flew it to a world record speed in 1932.

Beyond these reasons, I chose this airplane because I wanted to focus on the body, and how mistaken I believe artists' notions of the body are. All you have to do to disprove the notion that design reiterates the image of the human body is to look at this airplane, unless...

...Unless, of course, you're Mr. Milk Bottle.

Analog Engine Series

This series consists of nine prints, but because they are relatively involved, each will be discussed individually.

Analog Engine

In 1986, I began working on a piece of software called ArtEngine. Given two pieces of art, the Engine would synthesize them, making a new piece of art. The Engine could remember this new third piece of art, and combine it with others. I finished the software in 1991. Then I discovered that the logic in my software could be represented visually using symbols devised by engineers. I took one type of symbol and made Analog Engine.

I have made all kinds of variations of this image, from logically functional animations to still images. Recently (2002), I built a seven-foot tall sculpture of the Engine; a photo-based print of this object is included in the Box. Besides its general form, and the general formula...given 2 images, the Engine makes a new third one from them...the Engine's energy source has been a constant.

Computers can be made of anything—pulleys and ropes, and tinkertoys have been used--and can run on any kind of energy. I chose steam in honor of Charles Babbage, the man who built the first computer, the Difference Engine, in England in the 1800's. It was steam powered.

Red Truck by Fred Truck Announcement

This image is of the Badge of Quality factory rollout of the production version of the Hot Rod, or the Red Truck by Fred Truck.

The Hot Rod

The hot rod is a fiberglass version of a 1929 Ford Closed Cab pickup truck. All molding has been removed, but the cab height is stock. The plastic is very hard on the outside, but the inside face doubles as upholstery and is soft.

The chassis is bent from rectangular tubing.

The front end is a Mustang IFS.

The rear end is Ford 9" with coil-over shocks.

It is at the engine level that things get interesting.

The hot rod's engine is a logic circuit called Analog Engine. Given two images, Analog Engine makes a new, third image from them. Analog Engine runs on Digital Gas. Digital Gas is a liquid, concentrated form of steam. In the bed of the truck is the Memory Device, which enables the Red Truck to remember images it makes, so these new images can then be combined with others, ad infinitum, just as chromosomes break apart and combine with others to make new life forms.

The Red Truck rolls out on a red and white checkerboard floor, a feature common to many design garages.

The Engine, Versions 1 & 2

Here are two different versions of Analog Engine in the Red Truck. Here, the Engine is all red, but other times I color it red, blue and yellow.

Digital Gas Series **Digital Gas**

This image shows the Red Truck by Fred Truck in its pre-production dress, at a Digital Gas pump.

In the upper right area of the image, we find the Sun God in his 2-headed dragon form. The head on the left end of the Sun God is the rising sun; the head hanging down is the setting sun. The dragon body is made up of a chromosome and another Analog Engine. In this image, the Sun God encircles the globe so his two heads could meet, but the rear head is considering the gas pump, which contains Digital Gas.

Digital Gas Series **The American Home**

In the driveway is a pump which dispenses Digital Gas. It is an antique type of pump.

The house that apparently is The American Home, is a two-story brick house with a tower and many unusual architectural features. Actually, the American Home consists of the house, the Red Truck and the Digital Gas Pump. The entire image is being moved from east to west at a very high

rate of speed on the back of the celestial dragon, the two-headed Sun God form. This beast is made up of the Sun God, the rising sun, a Chromosome, another Analog Engine, and the Setting Sun.

Digital Gas Series

Drive 3 or Red Truck by Fred Truck

This image continues the development of the image of the Red Truck by Fred Truck.

The driver of the Red Truck is not shown clearly; his face is screened off by the windshield bows.

The driver's face actually appears in the upper right area of the image, where we find the Sun God in his 2-headed dragon form. As the driver's face is screened by the windshield bows, so is the Sun God's face only partially visible, screened off by the frame of the picture.

The head on the left end of the Sun God is the rising sun; the head hanging down is the setting sun. The dragon body is made up of a chromosome and another Analog Engine.

The landscape is my impression of a particular stretch of land along I-80, just east of Newton, Iowa. Seen at high speed, of course!

Analog Engine Series, Mayan Vase Rollout

This image is done in the style of a rollout photograph. When archaeologists want to read the graphics and glyphs on a Mayan vase, they put it on a turntable. The turntable is synched with a camera so that when a picture is taken, a single long photograph results of the vase in a 360 degree rotation as though it was flattened. It makes reading the image much easier.

This image shows Analog Engine producing the first Giorgione/Duchamp synthesized image. If you look closely, you can see the pistons moving from frame to frame, and the Sun God rises and sets, indicating the cycle.

Platypus in Cyberspace

This print shows the relationship of the Analog Engine to the Badge of Quality Corporation and its bio-engineering enterprises. It concerns an adventure Mr. Milk Bottle had operating Analog Engine, deep in the basement of the Badge headquarters. He successfully generated a Platypus in Cyberspace, by giving the Engine a beaver's body and tail on one hand, and a duck's bill and webbed feet on the other.

Analog Engine Printout: Duchamp and Giorgione

While Analog Engine has been used by Mr. Milk Bottle to generate a platypus, it also synthesizes art.

This image represents one processed and created by Analog Engine, using its familiar formula: given 2 images, the Engine makes a new third one from them. The base image given the Engine is *Fête Champêtre* by Giorgione, painted about 1510. (There is a lot of debate about who painted this image, Giorgione or Titian, but since it has been associated with Giorgione from the beginning of its history, I feel he painted it.)

The second image given is a photograph by Julian Wasser, taken in 1963 in Pasadena, California, of Marcel Duchamp and Eve Babitz playing chess. Behind them is Duchamp's masterwork, *The Large Glass*.

In Giorgione's original, there are two male musicians, one singing and the other playing a wonderfully drawn lute, and a nude woman with a flute that disappear in the synthesis with the Wasser photograph.

The image works because in the Giorgione painting, the men are involved in their music and seem unaware of the women. In the photo of Duchamp and Babitz, Duchamp is totally absorbed in his game.

This situation underscores the basic truth of Analog Engine: you cannot compare things unless they are virtually identical.

In the current Printout, both Giorgione's original painting and the synthesized result of the Fête Champêtre and Wasser's photo are contained in an extrapolated frame of The Large Glass.

Analog Engine Sculpture 2002

This sculpture, made of PVC and painted yellow, blue and red with a black support structure, is about 7 feet high, over 8 feet wide, and about 4 feet deep. It most closely resembles the machine Mr. Milk Bottle used to generate the platypus with.

As I have worked with the ideas of Analog Engine over the years, my feelings have focused and refined themselves. Above all:

Analog Engine is an arrangement of logic switches that explores the identity of logic and the maze, the conscious and unconscious.

Or...even better:

Analog Engine is the brains of the Badge of Quality Corporation.

The Badge of Quality Collection

At the beginning of 1999, I began to make small sculptures based on my print series, The Adventures of Mr. Milk Bottle. From the beginning, I realized that these particular sculptures would not be done in an edition, so I decided to digitally photograph them, work over the photographs, and make prints. I planned to show the sculptures with giant prints behind them.

The first two prints in this series are called "The Badge of Quality Collection, Plastic Edition." These sculptures are made of polymer clay, which is the same material used for television's Claymation work. I like to work with this material because it is immediate, and because it has a nice, "lumpy" result when it is not carved or sanded.

The group portrait of all the sculptures is a reference to the many photos made of Marcel Duchamp's "Boîte-en-valise," because of its general arrangement.

One of the remarkable things about the Disney Corporation has been its ability to get the image of Mickey Mouse on all kinds of things, and to issue it as watches, cheap porcelain sculpture, and sweatshirt designs. Because my particular favorite Disney format is porcelain sculpture, the Badge of Quality Corporation has created the Collection, in Plastic and Bronze for those collectors among you.

Flowers Series

The Flowers Series developed because I sometimes get tired of a project, all the pushing and pulling it takes to complete something. This happened when I made the "Bronze Bust of Mr. Milk Bottle." By the time I had it in my hands, I had lost my sense of humor. Things weren't fun.

During its fabrication, I had a discussion with the foundry about whether the sculpture should be hollow, like a real milk bottle. I insisted, and to their credit, the foundry people carried out my wishes exactly.

I began to see my sculpture not as a bust, but as a vase. The day I took it to the gallery, I had a huge urge to put flowers in it. By the following day, I couldn't resist. I went to the supermarket, bought a bunch of flowers that looked right, and zipped downtown. I told Carolyn Sherwood, President of Steven Vail Galleries, what I wanted to do, got the sculpture, stuck the flowers in it, and began to prepare a digital photo.

No one seriously questioned what I was about until Carolyn asked, "Don't you want to arrange the flowers?" It hadn't occurred to me.

Carolyn did the flowers, and I began shooting. This print, and the next one, which has no title are all expressions of my impulse towards fun. I've explained it other ways, also—like the moment of realization, or a thought balloon. But this is Mr. Milk Bottle, personification of the Badge!

The Bronze Fat Boy and the Fat Boy Prints

I began the Fat Boy series in 1994. Sometime prior to the series' inception, I read Richard Rhodes' powerful book, "The Making of the Atomic Bomb." About the same time, I read a number of articles about the way in which nuclear weapons were being deployed internationally. Nuclear weapons were effective only if the nation using them had a monopoly; otherwise, they were effective only if not used. Thus, nuclear weapons became markers of the limits of the acceptable. This far, but no further. I thought if I could make an image of a nuclear weapon beautiful, I could fuse the

current political attitudes towards these bombs with a very old notion of art: This image is too powerful to use, so we'll put it in a museum. Of course, this is what the ancient Greeks did with the treasures they plundered from other cultures. They put these icons in a small temple near the Parthenon for safekeeping.

Rhodes revealed some other things about the early nuclear weapons that made me believe the parallels between them and art were very strong. First, the Fat Man and Little Boy bombs were hand made, one-of-a-kind objects. Later, I went to see the Enola Gay exhibit at the National Air and Space museum several times. I could see the hammer dents in the Fat Man's skin.

I remembered my childhood, my school years. I grew up near an armory where the Fat Man was mass-produced after World War II. I remember going to the basement of the school, which was deemed a bomb shelter by some civil servant. I remember the duck and cover drills. Somewhere, I have a photograph of my wife, my brother-in-law and other friends and myself sitting on a Fat Man shell in front of the armory office building at Middletown, taken on July 4, 1976, our Bi-centennial.

I combined the Fat Man and Little Boy bombs in my art bomb, Fat Boy. Because I like round things, I made my bomb very round, cartoon round.

There is a series of prints, ranging from **The Red Fat Boy** and **Fat Boy in the Environment** to the **Neon** and **Neon Glow Fat Boys** and the **Fat Boy and Target**. All these prints struggle in one way or another to normalize the bomb as part of our human environment. I use this cartoon quality to help this struggle along. All my attempts are overshadowed by **The Cloud**.

When I made the bronze bomb, I wanted that cartoon quality expressed in three dimensions. The Bronze Fat Boy looks like a toy, but just try to play with it.

Mr. Milk Bottle in his Balloon Dream

This small bronze sculpture was the centerpiece in my 2001 show at Steven Vail Galleries. It captures Mr. Milk Bottle in one of his flying or floating dreams. He is apparently being carried aloft by the balloon he is blowing up. This particular print was used in a 30x40 inch lightbox, which was displayed behind the edition of sculptures.

Genre

This image was made as I prepared for my 2001 show, **It's All About Money!** In addition to the small bronze **Mr. Milk Bottle in his Balloon Dream**, I did a ceramic edition of **The Bust of Mr. Milk Bottle**. I had several of these on the mantle, as well as the whole bronze edition. Coming downstairs, late at night in the winter, the softly lit mantle in the darkened room reminded me of many of the Dutch genre paintings. I made the photograph and the image was printed.

The Attack of Mr. Milk Bottle

This series of two images is the result of a horror movie Mr. Milk Bottle made in Tokyo in 1954. The plot has often confused critics:

For no apparent reason, Mr. Milk Bottle turns into a giant and attacks a small town.

Nevertheless, as with all of the Bottle's films, it was a runaway hit!

The print came first, in the summer of 2001. Later, I decided to do a commemorative ceramic edition of based on the print, in a vein similar to the many Disney ceramics of Mickey Mouse.

The Kanji was done by my friend, Mano Tohei. Translated, it reads: The attack of the bottle holding milk. There is no exact Japanese equivalent for Mr. Milk Bottle.

Sun God

This is Kinich Ahau, the Mayan Sun God. He has crossed eyes, catfish gills, and is indicating the duality typical of gods: with one hand, he says, "Gimme," and with the other, he says, "Stop!"

The Sun God appears in **The Adventures of Mr. Milk Bottle** and in the web site as The Red Baseball, Mr. Milk Bottle's sworn enemy.

From the Boardroom of the Badge of Quality Corporation

The Boardroom of the Badge of Quality Corporation is where the most powerful leaders of our organization, including Mr. Milk Bottle, gather to make decisions concerning directions the corporation will take in the future.

Clear thinking is essential.

To that end, the room is for the most part decorated in a very spare, almost Zen-like style. The lone splashes of color are provided by these photographs of some of the bonsai in the Badge's collection, taken by Mr. Milk Bottle.

The first is a Chojubai Flowering Quince. It is in a Tokoname pot. At the time of the photography, this 3.5 inch tree had 32 blossoms.

The second is a Concord Grape bonsai. It's trunk is 9 inches across at the base.

The third and fourth are of our Girard's Dwarf Lavender Azalea in two stages of blooming.

These photos remind the leaders of our group that the harshness of nature reveals our fleeting beauty in the struggle to survive.