



PLAQUES&LETTERS.COM

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False Advertising Complaint Against: Berntsen International Inc., PO Box 8670, Madison, WI 53708-8670, ph: 1-800-356-7388. fax: 1-800-249-9794. email: surveymark@berntsen.com
Website: Homepage: <http://www.berntsen.com/> & their problematic:
<http://www.berntsen.com/GoShopping/Construction/EngravedBronzePlaques/tabid/1899/Default.aspx> Contact: Peter Berntsen

Federal Trade Commission
Consumer Response Center
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear FTC:

There's a dynamic that lies run rampant in the architectural signage industry—*False Advertising by my competitors*—particularly as it relates to cast and etched plaques, and cast & flat cut metal letters offerings. If people choose to work with liars, that's their option... but they should be able to know who they're dealing with. Please visit <http://www.plaquesandletters.com/FTC/THE%20TRUTH%20ABOUT%20ARCHITECTURAL%20PLAQUES%20&%20LETTERS%20AQUISITION.pdf> for more. It is a simple fact that Matthews Bronze, A.R.K. Ramos, Gemini, Southwellco, International Bronze & Trigard are the major, reputable manufacturers in the bronze & aluminum plaques industry. (The first four also produce letters.)

VALIDATION THAT TRIGARD IS AN ACTUAL MANUFACTURER:

I've had Trigard make [product](#) for me before, and even have a "[client-miscue](#)" done with them in my sunroom. [Some examples of previous projects are enclosed](#). The relationship was severed when their Rich Darby was affronted that'd I'd emailed Berntsen about their lies spring of '08 (apparently Berntsen was a larger customer which Trigard preferred to retain.) I've tossed Trigard brochures & image CD, but I know this industry front-to-back. I've acquired a [.pdf sales tool](#) of theirs however. Print of it is enclosed. As this series of Complaints deals with Trigard dealers masquerading as manufacturers, only one printout is deemed needed to enclose. Trigard has two websites:

1. <http://www.trigardbronze.com/> The enclosed prints of "About Trigard":
<http://www.trigardbronze.com/about-trigard>, "Find a Rep":
<http://www.trigardbronze.com/find-a-rep> & "Become a Dealer":

<http://www.trigardbronze.com/become-a-dealer> are significant. Distributors wouldn't offer the latter two.

2. <http://www.engravedbronze.com> Compare the images printed from the slideshow on <http://www.engravedbronze.com/BP2.htm> & here <http://www.trigardbronze.com/plaques-and-signs/sign-photo-gallery/site-branding> to all pretenders' images enclosed, which are often the same.

VALIDATION THAT BERNTSEN IS NOT AN ACTUAL MANUFACTURER OF ENGRAVED PLAQUES, BUT RATHER A TRIGARD DISTRIBUTOR:

They clearly post on their

<http://www.berntsen.com/GoShopping/Construction/EngravedBronzePlaques/tabid/1899/Default.aspx>: "**Our unique process** allows us to create plaques or signs that a person can literally become a part of as they gaze into your work of art...**Our 3-D relief images** bring to life an industry that was dominated by "text only" plaques and signs. Berntsen believes every plaque we sell has a story to tell. We all know how rapidly technology advances, while at the same time the costs come down. This trend **allows us** to add 3-D relief images to your project for a fraction of the cost and time of casting...**Our unique process** allows us to cut turnaround time in half without compromising the quality of your job. **Our engraving machines** do all of the work. Technology provides the power to turn your idea into reality in a matter of weeks rather than months. From the initial order to delivery of product we guarantee [sic] a quality product that will endure for years to come... You will find **our Engraved Bronze Plaques** to be the most economical product in the marketplace today. **Our process** of "painting pictures" on to a bronze canvas by the use of machinery and **patented technology**...

There are two fundamental problems there:

1. "Their" "**process**" and "their" "**engraving machines**" and "their" "**patented technology**" isn't Berntsen's. It's Trigard Bronze's, who actually make those plaques which Berntsen offers. I recall Trigard using the same verbiage on their original, now-tossed print materials. Their "**Hunt-Reed Library**" Brilliant Impressions (full-color) plaque is in the enclosed Trigard materials. Berntsen's Order Form <http://www.berntsen.com/Portals/3/pdfs/2006PlaqueOrderForm.pdf> is identical to Trigard's. Berntsen's Layout Form <http://www.berntsen.com/Portals/3/pdfs/2006PlaqueLayoutForm.pdf> is identical to Trigard's. Trigard has no issue with Berntsen making these claims as long as they sell their plaques...but I do. What Berntsen depicts is that they're manufacturers; that clearly implies is that they offer "manufacturer-direct" pricing and knowledge.
2. "Their" process—or at least that product—isn't "**unique**". Unique means: "One of a kind.". Not one, not two but *three other manufacturers besides Trigard now offer the same product*: Matthews Bronze, A.R.K. Ramos, & Gemini. Matthews Bronze calls theirs "**ImageCast™**" <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/imagecast/imagecasthome.aspx> A.R.K. Ramos calls theirs "Perfect Impression™". <http://www.arkramos.com/products/perfectimpression.asp> Gemini calls theirs "PhotoRelief™" <http://www.geminiplaques.com/photorelief.html>

Are all four (4) processes & products exactly identical? No more than the processes of making a Ford F-150 vs a Chevy Colorado...where the only difference is the grill. Otherwise they look the same, just as the offerings of Trigard, Matthews Bronze, A.R.K. Ramos, & Gemini do in this "bas-relief plaque alternative" realm. "It's a distinction without a difference." Do all of these manufacturers make grandiose claims about their own product? Sure: Just a Ford and Chevy do...even when they're offering a parity product. **The issue here is, Berntsen isn't a manufacturer of their "Engraved Plaques"** (as Trigard calls them; they're actually routed), as they would have you believe.

Does Berntsen make "things"? Yes...just not *these plaques* (same story as Franklin Bronze & Saxton, who I already have False Advertising Complaints in about). Berntsen makes surveying equipment like [Smart Targets, Datums & Reflectors](#) [Company Logo Concrete Markers](#) [Post Tension Cable Warning Markers](#) [Hammers, Drills & Driving Tools](#) & [Flagging & Targets](#). They could make hot air balloons for all that matters. Berntsen leads people to believe Berntsen will be making the engraved metal plaque they ordered. **That's the issue.**

Here's why all of this matters:

1. From experience, buyers like to know who they are buying from, **and disdain being hoodwinked**, regardless of the price or product they receive(d); it's a service to no one when lying prevails,
2. Distributors masquerading as manufacturers put honest distributors at a significant competitive disadvantage, and,
3. For those end users thinking they "hit the jackpot" by ostensibly buying "manufacturer-direct", looking no further, **they may never realize they might have received a better deal elsewhere.**

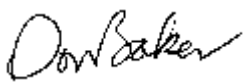
True, "It's a Free Country." People are allowed to lie. Others are allowed to call them on it. "Berntsen's" [Engraved Bronze Plaques](#) should be compelled to tell the truth online: 1) They will NOT be making the plaques that customers order from them, and 2) They didn't make any of the samples that they already post.

Production Note: A digital copy of this letter is included. Upon usage, you can click on the hyperlinks found there and immediately access the webpages offered here.

Actual Manufacturer's Contacts for Reference:

Trigard Bronze: 3901 N. Vermilion OR: 1125 N. Kimball, Danville, IL. 61834. ph: 800-637-1992 OR 800/798-4900. fax: 217-442-9182 website: <http://www.trigardbronze.com/> <http://www.engravedbronze.com/> email: engravedbronze@trigard.com

Thank You,



Don Baker