



## PLAQUES & LETTERS.COM

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08/10/2009

False Advertising Complaint Against: Architectural Bronze Aluminum Corporation. 655 DEERFIELD RD. STE #100 PMB422, DEERFIELD, ILLINOIS 60015-3241. Owner: Ken Cooper. ph: TOLL FREE (800) 339-6581. fax: FAX (847) 266-7301. email: [sales@architecturalbronze.com](mailto:sales@architecturalbronze.com) Website: <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/>

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%20ACQUISITION.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.)

Architectural Bronze Aluminum Corporation is engaged in False Advertising. That's easily proven because they've—Ken Cooper—even admitted it to me in an email (enclosed; more later). They clearly post on their Homepage <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/index.asp> : **manufacturers** of bronze plaques, **cast bronze plaques** & **cast aluminum plaques**, tablets, **award plaques**, **ImageCast™**, metal nameplates, **metal medallions**, control panels, trophies, signs, logos, **lettering**, **etchings**, and much more... They should have included the word "formerly". They're not "**manufacturers**" on any real, ongoing, weekly or even monthly basis (more later).

On their (Ken's, actually) "About Us" page:

[http://www.architecturalbronze.com/about\\_us.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/about_us.asp) Ken offers in part: "Thank you for choosing Architectural Bronze & Aluminum Corp., a four generation family owned corporation. For the **honor and integrity** of a precious crafted, finely designed cherished bronze plaque – look no further than Architectural Bronze & Aluminum Corp. As the master artists of old created beauty, we professionally **create and produce**, with care, your classic design limited only by your imagination...Honor, integrity and beauty are the final products...**our craftsmanship** will create a unique graphic presentation..."

Stepping into the Architectural Bronze Aluminum Corp. at 3638 W. Oakton in Skokie is like **going back in time...** In his shop, decorated with antique furniture, owner Ken Cooper is able to customize bronze plaques... **Cooper vows never to scrap his machines**, but instead to donate them to a museum **when the time comes...** Cooper inherited the enterprise 30 years ago from his father, founder Harry Cooper... **Cooper continues the family tradition...**

### **BRONZE PLAQUES:**

**Matthews Bronze casts virtually ALL of Architectural Bronze's plaques**, easily for at least a decade or more. Some little dormant foundry cannot buy bronze ingot at the same price as "the big boys" do and still compete in this tough metals market. While Ken's decision to outsource all efforts makes sense...he's dishonest to the public, making them believe that **they're getting the hands-on efforts of a true caster...**as well as "manufacturer-direct pricing". Not on a good...or any other day. Ken Cooper's:

1. "honor and integrity" text "needs 'massaging'",
2. "create and produce" is a clear indication that he's still claiming *current* production,
3. "our craftsmanship" means the same,
4. "going back in time..." indicates others should join him...with no validation,
5. "Cooper vows never to scrap his machines" Practically speaking, that should be rethought, as he (almost) never uses them, instead outsourcing **virtually all offerings**,
6. "when the time comes..." should be now, as all they're really good for is props, and
7. "Cooper continues the family tradition..." must mean they were all "dissemblers"...or perhaps Ken has started a new "family tradition".



Has ARBZ existed for 75 years?

Perhaps, and that and that cigar-band graphic holds great currency for people...**but that doesn't mean they are still casting.** That's the **only** relevance. From experience and presentation, **people disdain being hoodwinked by who they're buying from...regardless of what quote they might receive.**

Ken's [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/sculptured\\_relief\\_plaques.asp?id=199](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/sculptured_relief_plaques.asp?id=199) offers in part: "... an innovative, patented process that offers the ability to create truly personalized plaques..." ...but neglects to mention that it isn't Ken's, but rather Matthews Bronze's "ImageCast" product: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/imagecast/imagecasthome.aspx> Once again, Ken is taking credit for others' work, and conveying that his "corporation" can produce that product...and representing it as his own.

Bronze Plaques link [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast\\_bronze\\_plaques.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast_bronze_plaques.asp) offers in part: "From a simple plaque with wording to an elaborate custom design, each piece is produced to order, one at a time, by **craftsmen** committed to your satisfaction." Perhaps so, but those "craftsmen" would be Matthews' in Pittsburgh, not Ken's in Chicago. From his Galleries: <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-banks.asp?id=48> was ACTUALLY cast by Matthews Bronze, hereafter referred to as MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=7&kw=Bank&kwid=9&nImages=1>

<http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-buildings.asp?id=50> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=6&kw=Bas%20Relief&kwid=10&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-buildings.asp?id=49> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=7&kw=Bas%20Relief&kwid=10&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-buildings.asp?id=156> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=9&kw=Sculptured%20Texture&kwid=109&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-community.asp?id=52> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=31&kw=Organization&kwid=84&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-corporations.asp?id=59> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=0&kw=Union%20Border&kwid=125&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-community.asp?id=53> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=37&kw=Military&kwid=73&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-corporations.asp?id=58> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Natural+Sandblast&si=756&mi=12&type=2&item=761> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-corporations.asp?id=55> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=9&kw=Fire%20Department&kwid=44&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-corporations.asp?id=56> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=35&kw=High%20Polished&kwid=55&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-dedication.asp?id=125> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Modeled+Emblem&si=819&mi=117&type=2&item=838> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-government.asp?id=62> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Government&si=0&mi=150&type=1&item=18> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-government.asp?id=63> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Government&si=0&mi=150&type=1&item=46> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-hospital.asp?id=71> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Hospital&si=0&mi=65&type=1&item=20> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-hospital.asp?id=70> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Hospital&si=0&mi=65&type=1&item=38> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-hospital.asp?id=69> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=6&kw=Hospitals&kwid=58&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-logos.asp?id=72> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=11&kw=Bas%20Relief&kwid=10&nImages=4> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-miscellaneous.asp?id=75> was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=3&kw=Miscellaneous&kwid=74&nImages=4>

[http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted\\_bas\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=130](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted_bas_relief_portraits.asp?id=130) was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=39&kw=Modeled%20Portrait&kwid=78&nImages=4>  
[http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted\\_bas\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=144](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted_bas_relief_portraits.asp?id=144) was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Bas+Relief&si=0&mi=210&type=1&item=98> [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted\\_bas\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=143](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-sculpted_bas_relief_portraits.asp?id=143) was also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Bas+Relief&si=0&mi=210&type=1&item=90> The top left double-headed Ukrainian eagle, and top right Emergency Services plaques posted on Ken's Homepage <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/> were also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=0&kw=Historic&kwid=56&nImages=4> & <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=38&kw=Government&kwid=50&nImages=4> (as was the Cooper radiused plaque with horizontal lines, already entered). The bas relief plaque in the center also ACTUALLY cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Bas+Relief&si=630&mi=210&type=2&item=693> Ken's bas relief link [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/sculptured\\_relief\\_plaques.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/sculptured_relief_plaques.asp) offers: "Bas Relief sculptured portraits, logos and emblems can be created in our studios from your photo or design." It posts the same "Cyril E. King Airport" and "John Fisher Aerospace Test Center" Matthews plaques previously linked in this letter: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Bas+Relief&si=0&mi=210&type=1&item=98>



If Ken's such a "master craftsman"...what's he doing posting pictures of someone else's work—Matthews Bronze's—on his Homepage? (The satin finish cast aluminum "G" found there is Gemini's work.) From all evidence, Ken posts NONE of his own work on his website...if he indeed ever ACTUALLY did any.

Ken's Portraits link [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched\\_portraits.asp?id=151](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched_portraits.asp?id=151) offers a familiar "four-headed sketch plaque" of MB's seen here: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Etched&si=414&mi=138&type=2&item=516>, as well as this threadbare image of theirs:

<http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=16&kw=Portraits&kwid=95&nImages=4> , as well as the enclosed page copied from their print catalog. [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=147](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat_relief_portraits.asp?id=147) is again, actually MB's work: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=26&kw=Portraits&kwid=95&nImages=4> [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=146](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat_relief_portraits.asp?id=146) is again, actually MB's work: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=29&kw=Portraits&kwid=95&nImages=4> One more portrait example: [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat\\_relief\\_portraits.asp?id=150](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-flat_relief_portraits.asp?id=150) is again, actually MB's work: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=31&kw=Portraits&kwid=95&nImages=4>

### CAST ALUMINUM PLAQUES:

Ken's [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast\\_aluminum\\_plaques.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast_aluminum_plaques.asp) offers the same boilerplate: "Whether your design is just an idea or is in finished, camera-ready form, our staff of experienced professionals is prepared to bring it to reality. Virtually any type of design can be produced in a flat relief or with a dimensional sculpture. From a simple plaque with wording to an elaborate custom design, each piece is produced to order, one at a time, by **craftsmen** committed to your satisfaction." Ken doesn't have any "**craftsmen**" in Chi-Town doing this, as he'd have you believe. It's being done in Pittsburg PA by Matthews Bronze. I'm not spending the same time, paper & ink pursuing Ken's offerings for cast aluminum as I did for cast bronze. Here are just a few examples: Ken's [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast\\_aluminum\\_plaques.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast_aluminum_plaques.asp) & <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cap-government.asp?id=88> offers an image of a "Park Place" aluminum casting actually done by Matthews: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=32&kw=Aluminum&kwid=5&nImages=4> (It's the same "Park Place" plaque Franklin Bronze posted...before I informed them that they were being "outed". Then they removed it, among other misleading offerings). <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cap-corporations.asp?id=85> was actually cast by—you guessed it—MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Aluminum&si=0&mi=97&type=2&item=42> <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cap-community.asp?id=84> was again cast by MB: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/scripts/lax.cgi/imageaxs?kw=Community&si=0&mi=99&type=1&item=59>

### ETCHED PLAQUES:

Interestingly: In Architectural Bronze's "**Etched Plaques Gallery**" [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched\\_plaques.asp?id=102](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched_plaques.asp?id=102) [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched\\_plaques.asp?id=50](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched_plaques.asp?id=50) & [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched\\_plaques.asp?id=49](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cbp-etched_plaques.asp?id=49) &...there's not an etched plaque in sight. Those are all bas relief cast bronze...cast by Matthews Bronze: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=6&kw=BasRelief&kwid=10&nImages=1> & <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=7&kw=BasRelief&kwid=10&nImages=1> This "master craftsman" should know the product he's offering.

### ARCHITECTURAL LETTERING:

Here, ARBZ switches to Gemini as the manufacturer. They're the industry leader, and nobody can match their delivery and price.

[http://www.architecturalbronze.com/architectural\\_lettering.asp](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/architectural_lettering.asp) &

[http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast\\_letters.asp?id=161](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast_letters.asp?id=161) offers: "Cast metal letters are made by pouring molten metal into sand molds offering a greater depth, texture and dimension than flat cut out letters. Honor, integrity and beauty are the final products we create in everlasting bronze and aluminum...Architects concept or your own inspiration, our craftsmen will create a unique graphic presentation." Ken's still clearly stating his "corporation" makes this product line. They're actually made at various Gemini facilities located across the U.S. (depending on font, etc.) [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast\\_letters.asp?id=160](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast_letters.asp?id=160) simply displays the typical Gemini graphics & font selections, as also seen by another Gemini distributor on: <http://www.signwire.com/dimensional-letters/metal/cast-metal.php> They depict the identical finishes & colors as seen on Ken's: [http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast\\_letters.asp?id=175](http://www.architecturalbronze.com/al-cast_letters.asp?id=175)

As with both plaques as well as letters, there are no coincidences in this industry. Distributors posting images of their manufacturer(s) images is reasonable and expected. **"Manufacturer" poseurs posting images of a real manufacturer's work is not.**

Per the referenced and enclosed email between Architectural Bronze's Ken Cooper & I, I offered Ken: "-----Original Message-----"

**From:** [admin@plaquesandletters.com](mailto:admin@plaquesandletters.com) [mailto:[admin@plaquesandletters.com](mailto:admin@plaquesandletters.com)] **Sent:** Monday, December 20, 2004 7:57 PM **To:** [sales@architecturalbronze.com](mailto:sales@architecturalbronze.com) **Subject:** Clarification Needed

You're kidding with all of this crap right? : <http://www.architecturalbronze.com/index.asp> "The shop, one of the last of it's kind in the world, is a cross between an old-fashioned smithy and turn-of-the-century metallurgy factory.....In his shop, decorated with antique furniture, owner Ken Cooper is able to customize bronze plaques, signs, trophies and medals with machinery – including one dating back to the pre-Industrial-Revolution 1800s that originally operated under water, then steam and now electric power."

You're currently being eclipsed with someone who actually knows truth from fantasy. You're Matthews [and Gemini]Dealers simple as that..." **Ken's initial reply:**

"**From:** [architecturalbronze](mailto:architecturalbronze) **To:** [admin@plaquesandletters.com](mailto:admin@plaquesandletters.com) **Sent:** Tuesday, December 21, 2004 9:04 AM **Subject:** RE: Clarification Needed

Hey Don, It sells! Best wishes for Happy Holidays. kc

Ken Cooper, Pres.  
Architectural Bronze & Aluminum Corp.  
3638 W. Oakton St. Skokie, IL 60076  
Phone (847)674-3638 Phone - (800) 339-6581  
Fax: (847)674-3452  
E-Mail: [sales@architecturalbronze.com](mailto:sales@architecturalbronze.com)  
Web site: [www.architecturalbronze.com](http://www.architecturalbronze.com)"

Then he later offered: "Hey Don, Better careful about what you say about my company - I have manufactured bronze plaques for about 40 years and still have the tools and ability to do so when I am so inclined. Best wishes. kc" People aren't interested in buying plaques and letters from someone who: "still has the tools and ability to do so when they are so inclined." This is nothing short of a "bait & switch". It's reasonable to state that ARBZ would have far fewer customers—and perhaps we more—if they knew this were Ken's "business model".

**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),
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 well 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. architecturalbronze.com should be compelled to tell the truth online: 1) They will NOT be making the plaques and letters that customers order from them, and 2) They didn’t “craft” the plaques that they already post. Ideally some “powers that be”—either you or states’ Attorney General— will be inclined to act upon this.

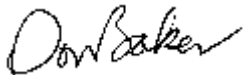
Production Note: A digital copy of this letter is included. Upon usage, you can click on the hyperlinks found there and immediately access the webpages offered here.

Actual Manufacturers’ Contacts for Reference:

Matthews Bronze: Matthews Bronze Architectural Division, 1315 West Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15226. ph: 1-412/571-5500. fax: 1-412/571-5561 Website: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/>

Gemini Inc.: 103 Mensing Way, Cannon Falls, MN. 55009 ph: 1-800/538-8377 fax: 1-800/421-1256 Website: <http://www.signletters.com/>

Thank You,



Don Baker