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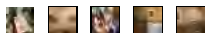
Art & Design

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Collective bargains

Industry of the Ordinary sets up shop at NEIU. *By Lauren Weinberg*

Published: September 16, 2009



To create Supermarketing (2009), Industry of the Ordinary (IOTO) asked people to post photographs of themselves using their "I WANT TO BE ORDINARY" grocery bags on Facebook. A pile of the bags sits in the Fine Arts Center Gallery for visitors to take.


Adam Brooks, 50, and Mathew Wilson, 42, are going to sell their baby on eBay. It isn't an ordinary baby, explain the artists who make up the Chicago-based collective Industry of the Ordinary (IOTO). It's anatomically correct but made of beeswax. On Friday 18, they'll wheel the baby around the campus of Northeastern Illinois University, where their exhibition "SuperMarket" is on view in the [Fine Arts Center Gallery](#) through September 25. Then they're going to auction it off.

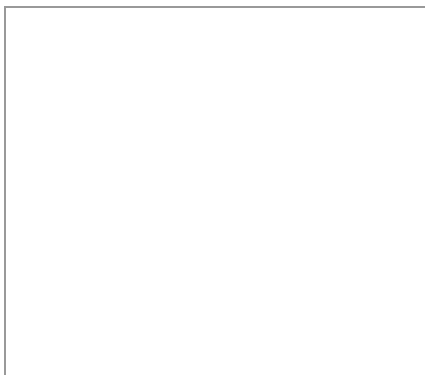
All of the projects in "SuperMarket" have something to do with "marketing or propagation," Wilson says. Though he and Brooks both grew up in England, they met in Chicago while teaching at Columbia College, and founded IOTO in 2003. Ever since, they've investigated not only straight-up consumerism but self-presentation and the dissemination of ideas as well.

If that sounds worthy but dull, you must not have seen Brooks and Wilson's 2005 performance *Ten*, when the artists created a replica—in ice—of former Alabama Supreme Court justice Roy Moore's infamous Ten Commandments sculpture and wheeled their version from the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) to the [Art Institute of Chicago](#). As it melted, they distributed the water in glass bottles marked FAITH. You must've also missed *Match of the Day II* (2005), when the duo dressed up as Old God and Young God and played foosball in Lake Michigan. (The artists' mutual love of soccer, or "football" as they call it, helped cement their friendship. "Watching football is where a lot of our idea generation continues to happen," Brooks says.) And you must not have responded to the Craigslist ad they posted for *Affair* (2008): In exchange for a "romantic night at a Chicago-area hotel," the artists asked a cheating couple to pose for a portrait (pictured).




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Not all of Brooks and Wilson's works seem expressly designed to piss off Glenn Beck. For their installation *Journeys* at the Wicker Park/Bucktown Public Library, the artists reprinted on the library's front windows the first and last lines of significant works of literature, including the Bible, as chosen by patrons and staff.

In "SuperMarket," *Supermarketing* (2009) brings together a few of the pair's pet themes. A stack of brown paper shopping bags labeled I WANT TO BE ORDINARY sits on the floor of the gallery, beneath photographs of people using the bags for their groceries (pictured). The shoppers posted their self-portraits on Facebook at the artists' request.

Facebook also shaped *Clandestine Work for Heather Weber* (2009). According to Wilson, Weber—the Fine Arts Center Gallery's director and curator—found a photo of herself "in high spirits" posted on the social-networking site without her consent. "It got us thinking about the way people present themselves—or, in this case, without their knowledge or agreement, are presented, particularly on Facebook," Brooks says. So IOTO invited Weber "to collaborate on an intimate and professionally compromising portrait of herself," which she hid in the gallery, critic Ciara Ennis writes in the exhibition essay. The artists don't know where Weber placed the piece. (We couldn't find it, either.)

Including artwork no one can see is only the second-oddest thing Brooks and Wilson did in organizing "SuperMarket," they assure us, suggesting their decision to display *Terrorist Paintings* represents a more significant departure from their normal practice. The three paintings, executed in different art-historically conscious styles, each say TERRORIST in Arabic—extending the artists' ongoing critique of branding in politics. "Neither of us is described as a painter," Brooks admits, adding that their de-skilled forays into the medium are intended to give it "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation." Wilson chimes in, "Or we may have proved that painting is indeed dead."

Industry of the Ordinary performs Friday 18, 6–9pm, during the reception for "SuperMarket" at NEIU's *Fine Arts Center Gallery*.

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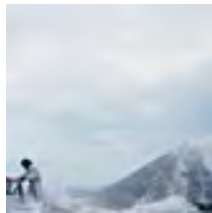
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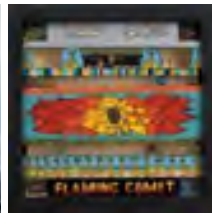
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