

Bawdy humor and tabloid culture reverberate through the work of Industry of the Ordinary (IOTO), an artist collective composed of Adam Brooks and Mathew Wilson, whose practice ranges from soliciting sex workers—*Re-Work (For Allan Kaprow, Marina Abramovic and Philip-Lorca diCorcia)* (2008)—and adulterers—*Affair* (2008)—from Craigslist as participants and co-producers of their work, to using highly-trafficked social networking sites like Facebook. Both Web outlets act as recruitment tools for would-be collaborators and as a platform for the shameless promotion and dissemination of the collective's work. Yet this bravado—much of the work delivers a comedic blow to the head before more subtle references kick in—cleverly disguises the critiques on social, cultural, religious and political systems that permeate the collective's work.

Both performative and relational, IOTO creates provocative, open-ended, interactive works that produce alternative communities and contradictory relationships within and between artist, audience and institution. In *Clandestine Work for Heather Weber* (2009), the roles of artist and curator are reversed. Weber, gallery director/curator at NEIU, was invited by IOTO to collaborate on an intimate and professionally compromising portrait of herself—far more revealing than faux suggestive girls-night-out images already displayed on her Facebook page—for an undisclosed site in the gallery. Sought by viewers eager to complete the exhibition's checklist, the work becomes a prurient scavenger hunt as Weber's private and professional lives become subject to scrutiny, forcing her to become gatekeeper of her own image and reputation. *Supermarketing* (2009) also relies on audience involvement to activate and complete the work, using the traditional gallery setting and Facebook as exhibition sites. Referencing the portable and viral strategies of Felix Gonzalez Torres's posters and candy projects, "I Want to be Ordinary," is printed on brown paper bags stacked on the floor engaging marketing as both tool and subject of the work. Both utilitarian and exhibitionist, the appropriated bags are filled with purchases by the new owners and documented with a photograph posted on Facebook, making them accomplices and stockholders in IOTO's global brand.

These aggressive and flirtatious marketing strategies extend into all their works, even the more formally inclined. *Terrorist Paintings* (2009) depicts three alternate abstractions—a geometric color-field work based on a television color bar pattern, a Brice Marden inspired encaustic painting and a white-on-white abstraction back-painted on glass. Embedded in all three is the word terrorist, translated into Arabic and reversed out. Referencing the collective's ongoing *Democracy* (2004 – 2009) project, where "Vote for Me" in Arabic appears in multiple forms (posters, tee shirts and neon-signs), *Terrorist Paintings* explores the prodigal and malevolent use of branding in politics. The Arabic text forces the viewer to consider the continuous and sustained branding of Arab identity, here and abroad. Another highly-trafficked internet site, eBay, is also prey to IOTO's dissemination and marketing tactics and is shrewdly engaged in *Baby* (2009)—a meticulous beeswax replica of a newborn infant. Settled on a stainless steel cart, *Baby* is wheeled purposefully—alongside other paper-laden trolleys—to various administrative centers of the host university before being auctioned on eBay.

Sampling high and low genres and visual languages at will, IOTO borrows from a wide range of art historical and contemporary movements—whichever seem appropriate for their cause, humor, provocation or editorial. Above all, through their performances and exhibitions, IOTO is concerned with disrupting prescribed roles of artist and viewer and collapsing the boundaries between private, public and institutional space.

Ciara Ennis, July 2009

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