

interview } by COREY POSTIGLIONE

Interview with Adam Brooks and Mathew Wilson by Corey Postiglione. This interview was conducted in Adam Brooks' studio over two consecutive days in late July 2005.

Corey | I am more familiar with Adam's previous work over the years and Mat's work I know from *Men of the World*, which was more performative and often collaborative. But my question is, how did *Industry of the Ordinary* get started?

Adam | Well, late in 2002 Mat and I decided that it would be interesting to consider making a project together. We'd known each other for a number of years prior to that and while we hadn't formally worked together we certainly had become aware of one another's activities, and as the *Men of the World* project had reached its conclusion, Mat was interested in starting to work in other ways. So we had a series of preliminary discussions, which resulted in the first project that we really did together, which was the piece **Dropping 163 lbs: Daley Plaza**. At that point we hadn't formalized the overarching title of our collaboration, it was still somewhat amorphous and we didn't know whether we would continue to work together. It really was by way of a test run even though the piece was fully realized ultimately and continues to exist on our website as the historical marker that really kicked off the *Industry of the Ordinary* project. But that was the point at which the collaboration really started and shortly thereafter we made a number of decisions regarding the title of the project, and the fact that we wanted it to function first and foremost as a web-based project that would work in multiple ways, but primarily as a site where documentation and evidence from the actions that we continued to perform would be manifest.

Corey | What was the date of this 163 lbs piece?

Adam | **Dropping 163 lbs** was in April of 2003.

Corey | Could you explain that piece a little bit, Mat?

Mat | Yes, for Patriot's Day we wanted to execute a guerilla action on Daley Plaza right in the middle of the Loop, surrounded by the State and Government buildings as it is. 163 lbs is the average weight, we discovered, of an American adult if you average everything else out: gender, race, etc... So, what we decided to do was to have people wearing articles of clothing, walk in, and at a given moment take off those clothes and drop them on the plaza. The piece was videotaped from a clock tower, indeed the clock striking nine was the cue to drop the clothes. You can see the clothes falling and it creates quite a wonderful little drawing.

Adam | They were white clothes.

Mat | And everything was white. Interestingly, it was the first time that a piece that I had done had been reported on prior to its execution. So, on this occasion, the police were aware of it and they showed up in significant numbers, ready to arrest everyone. This is obviously post 9/11, but everybody dropped their clothing and moved off in different directions so quickly that all the City did was to immediately remove the clothing. So on the video you see a City worker come out with a dumpster, a wheeled dumpster, and go around like PacMan eating all the clothes. It was, perhaps, the most satisfying video document that I'd got up until that point.

Corey | Mat, you studied performance at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), but you said that you had some reservations about the way it was being taught. Would you talk about that a little bit?

Corey | Now, what the reader doesn't know is that both of you have English accents so you're obviously English in some sense. Does this have any significance in bringing you together, and also, how you make work?

Adam | Well, the fact that we share a common upbringing means that we have an overlapping set of concerns, particularly in areas like sense of humor as well as the notion of a certain outsider status. I think we both feel strongly not just like outsiders in this culture, being in the United States, but, being in this country for a very long time, we both feel as if we're outsiders when we go back to England. I was 20 when I moved to the States and Mat was 23, and we've been in this country consistently, pretty much from that point onwards. We do, I believe, share a view of the world that is very synchronous. Mat, do you want to add anything to that?

Mat | I think that there are aesthetic similarities in some of our strategies prior to *Industry of the Ordinary*, which probably go back to some of our experiences of being trained in art making in England prior to coming here.

Adam | Except that I wasn't, and that is an interesting difference. I was self-taught as a kid and I never went to art college in England. It was only, really, after I came to the States that I was afforded the opportunity to formalize that education or experience.

Mat | I wouldn't say that it was the way that it was being taught, but when I came across from England I was immediately intrigued by performance, although at the time I didn't understand very much about it. However, a lot of the work that I was seeing seemed to me to be quite theatrical. In England, I'd been in critiques; I'd seen performance but I'd never really done anything that I regarded as performance. One of the worst things that you could say about a performance piece was that it was theatrical, that there was some acting taking place, there was some simulation taking place. And at SAIC I was seeing a lot of monologues and what appeared to me to be theater. That didn't interest me very much. But I was very naïve and it took me some time to work out what kind of performance I was going to make. It was a reductive process, I said to myself, 'If I'm not going to do that, what am I left with?' I was always interested in what differentiated performance from other things like theater or dance. I mean, obviously, performance borrows from everything else and it operates in the margins. It has something in common with theater and other live art, but it also has a history that is connected to painting and sculpture. It just took me a while to position myself, through trial and error, into a place where I thought I was making performance and not theater.

Corey | And all your works deal with real time.

Mat | Right.

Corey | Can we call your work political/ activist?

Adam | I think it's dangerous to pigeonhole any work as political, certainly with a large "P". Daniel Buren said that all artwork is in some way political with a small "p". The very act of making a discreet work becomes a politicized action, but I think that really what we're doing is taking information and subject matter that both of us feel is resonant and it needs in some way to be represented and doing just that: re-presenting it. The very title of our project, *Industry of the Ordinary*, and our manifesto, brief as it is, deals with the notion of taking aspects of the everyday and turning them, changing them, amplifying them, altering them and re-presenting them so that something that's familiar becomes somehow changed. And certainly, to go back to your earlier question about the antecedents to the project, both of us were already interested in this notion of the re-presentation of information, the taking of bits of existing cultural stuff and remaking them.

Corey | A major criticism of political art is that it is, usually, more political than it is aesthetic. How do you see the aesthetic component in your work?

Mat | It seems to me that the aesthetic pre-empts the political in the work. Some of the pieces can be seen as political and some of them come from a politicized place within us, perhaps, but there is no reason necessarily to read them as political. But I do feel that we do want to have them resonate and provoke and evoke and challenge the audience to ask questions. And that comes down to our aesthetic choices and presentation strategies. I don't think we see the project as a whole as political with a small "p", but some of the individual projects can be read more immediately as politicized, like **Child's Play**, where we sacrifice 100 used toys to General Logan. It seems to me that some of politics that we were discussing around that time, living in America and looking at the world around us, are more obviously present in that piece. Other pieces that we'll talk about subsequently, like **Tender**, though the political germ may have been there from the beginning, it is certainly obscured through the process of manipulating the materials, so that it becomes, and this is quite conscious, much more ambiguous.

Adam | And I think that it's important to consider the fact that our activity is really a hybridized one. It is not purely performative by any means. Because of the impetus to create a project that functioned online, it became an accumulation of image and text. If some of the performances or actions were designed to be seen by an audience others weren't necessarily designed to be considered in real time but only experienced through the website and subsequently through the creation of artifacts and objects that emanated from the actions. And so, because of that, the notion of an aesthetic component has always been uppermost from the very beginning; the idea that we wanted to design a website that was clean, that was straightforward, that was very legible in every way, both conceptually and visually, was something that was a given from the outset. And the fact that we solicited the help of a fledgling designer to work with us on the creation of the template for the website was a conscious decision. Neither of us had training in that particular area although we've subsequently taught ourselves and are now more self-reliant.

Corey | Many of your projects are ephemeral or transitory but you have created some objects. Are these more permanent works used to finance other pieces?

Corey | There's really a subtext there that's literal.

Mat | The relationship between those three objects sets up a series of overlapping literal readings that are certainly interesting to us. And the process generated an object, or the idea generated a process that generated an object, and we found ourselves with something marketable. I'm not sure that there was a conscious decision at the beginning to make objects to create a funding stream. But once the idea started to generate objects, and the funding stream presented itself to us, the enterprise felt appropriate. And it's clearly practical.

Adam | Well, I would certainly say that we are interested in a self-propagating mechanism, that it's necessary for us to consider the idea of making objects, artifacts, whatever you want to call them, in order to be able to realize continued support and funding possibilities out of them. In fact, we recently sold this set of three works collectively entitled **Tender** to a collector in Germany, which has enabled us to go ahead with this publication, which you are now reading. That was the tipping point of our funding quest. So, obviously, we're realistic in what we need to do in order to keep the project moving forwards in a variety of ways.

Mat | I think, for me, it has been a relatively new experience to produce objects out of my artistic activities. Pretty much everything I did before *Industry of the Ordinary* that can be regarded as post-graduate work had been performance. What links the objects to that previous experience is the process. I've always been interested in experiment in some sense. The not knowing is what forced me out to undertake an artistic experiment. In the case of **Tender** that process began, as our work habitually does, with a line of text, which generates a sufficient level of interest for both of us. We pulped a bible to make paper. We were interested in transforming, as we often are, one thing into another thing. In this case a book, into paper, into a drawing of oversized dollar bill. We then added the *9-11 Commission Report* and *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* as \$10 and \$100 bills respectively.

Adam | And I think, as is often the case, this process was organic and as Mat says, I don't think premeditated. Well, certainly from the outset of the project itself we didn't set out to, and I don't think either of us in the past have done this, to make art that we can then sell. That has been a secondary and happily accidental part of this project and certainly for me in my past activities something that has happened as a by-product of that activity. But, as Mat said, he never really made work that resulted in something which was tangible and commodifiable or commodified to the extent to which some of these things now are.

Corey | Were these done in an edition?

Mat | We have produced a second, unique, version. Obviously, the objects are quite different from one another. But the second version is for display as the first piece has been sold.

Corey | Religion plays a part in several of your pieces. It is somewhat ironic that in U.K. you have the Church of England but isn't it a more secular society? What is your view of religion in this country?

Adam | Well, I think that at the outset we should make a distinction between religion and faith. Because I think that a lot of these works that might seem to the casual viewer to be about religion are more about the way faith becomes politicized or transmuted in ways that have more to do with notions of societal mechanisms that the practice of faith is put at the service of, rather than the actual original notion of a faith in something which is beyond concrete vision.

Mat | I think that there seems to be something materially different, if that's the right way of putting it, between the way in which religion functions in this country and the way it does in Europe. England is increasingly secular as America moves in the opposite direction. So there is increasing divergence between Europe and America in this respect. Certainly my experience in England and the way religion permeates the culture there in no way prepared me for the way that it does here. My interest also has less to do with religion and more to do with faith. For me, there's nothing wrong with the belief in God, but I think that when the Church and the State overlap they do mutual disservice to each other.

Adam | Not to mention damage. And I think that it's interesting, too, talking about our backgrounds and our experience of the practice of particular faiths that it's true in this country that old-line religion, (Episcopalianism and even traditional Catholicism) also is in decline and it's evangelicalism, born-again, newly minted belief, that is explosively on the rise. And, in a sense, I think this reflects the whole notion of the premium that is placed on newness in this culture. The fact that the vast majority of denominations and particular churches that have undergone this enormous growth are new versions of old religious and faith-based practices. And it's no accident, I don't think, that many of those churches employ very sophisticated marketing techniques in order to continue to draw adherents, and service the economic structures that underlie their growth.

Corey | One of your recent pieces deals specifically with religion, faith, and the State: the **Ten Commandments** piece. Would you talk about that work and what initiated it?

Mat | We were producing a piece for the PAC/Edge 2005 Festival and we wanted to do a publicly-sited work.

Corey | What was that festival?

Adam | Performing Arts Chicago.

Mat | Every year until this year they would produce a festival of performance-based activities. We, at the time, had been discussing Judge Moore down in Alabama and his crusade to have the Ten Commandments sculpture that he'd had produced put into the court house down there.

Corey | That was bronze wasn't it?

Adam | No, it was granite.

Mat | At the moment it's being carted around on a flatbed truck garnering support for his cause. So we thought that we would do a piece in response to that. So we would transport an object that we had had produced through the streets of Chicago, between the Museum of Contemporary Art, down Michigan Avenue and to the Art Institute of Chicago. We had a replica made based on photographs of Moore's Ten Commandments sculpture, but fabricated out of ice.

Corey | And then, of course, what flowed from this; the ice melts...

Adam | Yes, the secondary part of the work is that because the work is transitory, because even though it was a cool day, it was a windy day and wind causes the ice to melt even faster than direct sunlight, we found out. But we knew that there needed to be even more to the work than just the creation of this object, this facsimile. So we set up a system whereby we had a tap that was attached to the moveable structure on which this Ten Commandments tablet was placed. And, as it melted, the reservoir of melting liquid was siphoned off into a series of small sandblasted bottles

and given out to the public. On each one of these vials was inscribed the word FAITH. So this became an act of dissemination and could be perceived as an act of generosity. People came up and looked at this curious object that was, going back to your notion of the aesthetic, a very beautiful object, but very curious. People weren't quite sure what to make of it at first, but in very short order they were able to apprehend the fact that it was a version of the Ten Commandments tablets, the two tablets that originally came as a material object into the public's consciousness through DeMille's representation of them in, I think it was, the film "The Bible", right?

Corey | The film was "The Ten Commandments".

Adam | And what a lot of people maybe aren't aware of, was that in the wake of this film there was this huge dissemination of these Ten Commandments sculptures or objects throughout America. And Judge Moore's version was only the latest one, but the fact that it was placed in a Federal building set it apart from the other objects that were sprinkled around the country but were, for the most part, on private property.

Corey | This is one of your most ambiguous pieces, in which you had some people seeing this really as an affirmation of faith. How do you feel about that?

Mat | The vast majority of responses were of the kind that you describe. That surprised me. I thought that we would have, perhaps, a more even split. After all, this object had a tap coming out of the side of it and we were siphoning off water. The presence of the tap seemed to me to be more than enough evidence to at least set up questions of the intention of the piece. Perhaps it was because of the beauty of the piece, this huge block of ice catching the light as it did and us wheeling it down the street. You know, art – perhaps this is what it's supposed to do – reflects the culture that surrounds it. We live in a culture in which there is a huge spectrum of people who believe in God (not all of them are Evangelicals or coming from the religious right, of course). But we live in a culture in which we're surrounded by this issue so, it seemed to me upon reflection, not surprising that most of the interaction that we had was with people assuming that it was a devotional piece. But I'm comfortable with that. There were a smattering of people who took the opposing view but, you know, the artwork isn't making a single, one-line statement. It sets up somewhere in the middle of an issue and asks questions. The interaction is part of the reason why we make art instead of writing editorials.

Corey | There is that interesting story about the ice fabricator...

Mat | Perhaps the most profound response to the piece was from the fabricator, who we call Phil the Ice. When we first met and hired him to create the sculpture, he had confided in us that he was trying to quit drinking. Later he revealed that the piece had had such an effect on him that he had successfully, he believed, quit drinking. And that this piece and what he saw as its intention were enough to have him make a life altering decision.

Corey | I think it's interesting that in one of the photos on your website of Mat pushing the cart with the ice sculpture he's wearing a slicker that looks sort of like a monk's cape with a hood and Mat also has a shaved head. So there was that association and, also, this idea of transformation, that there's something similar to the Catholic Mass where something is actually being transformed. Now it becomes this liquid. It's sort of as if you were bringing Lourdes to the people on a little pushcart. So I think that that probably contributed to some people reading this as, you know, some really devotional piece.

Mat | Well, the ponchos that we wore in that piece were actually a consequence ... we've worn costumes, some more elaborate than others, in a variety of different pieces, there is a conscious decision making process, we talk in advance about what we should wear, how we should appear. In this case, given the time of year we just thought that the weather might not cooperate, so we should wear something that was waterproof and these ponchos seemed an appropriate choice. So we stenciled INDUSTRY OF THE ORDINARY on the back of them. They are, in fact, Vietnam-era ponchos.

Adam | Army surplus.

Mat | Yes, army surplus. The connection, however, to our looking like monks was certainly not part of our thinking at the time.

p26 **Corey** | Let's stay with **Ten**. What problem do you have with the Ten Commandments per se? Are they not the basis for a lot of our laws?

Adam | I think that it's the literal absorption of these texts as the final word about morality. And the fact that there's a presupposition that to be moral one has to believe in a particular kind of deity. And the fact that they are used as both a cudgel and a gag by certain parts of the culture to say, "Look, we're right, and you're not." That "your views are not valid because you don't subscribe to the same kind of belief system that we do." And I think it's also interesting that the Ten Commandments in this case have become more than a series of lines of text but have been literally turned into a physical object that, more often than not, embodies other things than just those sentiments. I think that's why we were intrigued by this particular phenomenon of the Ten Commandments becoming literally an object. Becoming a vessel into which people could pour all kinds of other meaning.

Corey | You moved the piece from the Museum of Contemporary Art to the Art Institute. Was there any problem with the police in doing that?

Mat | Actually, on this occasion, we did have several interactions with the authorities. This we expected. There were a couple of police officers directing traffic or otherwise just sort of patrolling. And their interaction with the piece was to simply ask if they could have one of our bottles of water and we obliged in those cases. So it was a very congenial interaction. But in a prior piece, and I would have to say in looking back, it was a far less controversial piece on the face of it, we got into a fair amount of trouble.

Corey | Mat, are you referring to the piece **Line in the Sand**? p18

Mat | Right. That piece goes back to last year during our first series of works. A very simple piece; we were going to get a flesh colored crayon and create a line down State Street, another spine in the city.

Corey | What part of State Street?

Mat | It was at the south end of the Loop, perhaps between Jackson and one block south. I can't remember the exact block that we chose. We chose it because there was a series of big shop fronts down there and enough foot traffic to get some interaction with the public, but not so much as to unnecessarily inconvenience people.

Corey | And it was drawn down the center of State Street?

Mat | No. It was drawn down the center of the sidewalk.

Adam | So, no impeding of vehicular traffic. Nothing that seemed to us, in our planning of the work, to present much of an issue. Especially given the fact that this was a non-permanent marking device that we were using.

Mat | So, I went to the end of the block. Adam stood at the other end with a camera and was to document this line moving toward him. I was on my knees drawing this line, crawling along from one end of the block to the other. It was, in that sense, a very simple piece and not the sort that you would have thought would cause controversy. Later, Adam was photographing my hand that was covered in this crayon. My fingers were all scuffed up and I was out of breath. All of a sudden I was aware that there were several police officers around us and a couple of squad cars pulled up. A particularly irate police officer on a bicycle who had found me by, as you can imagine, simply following the line, got to the end of it, found me and asked...

Adam | What the hell you were doing.

Mat | ...in an agitated state. It became clear that he wanted to arrest me and he cuffed me and he put me in the squad car. He asked Adam whether he had anything to do with this and Adam said, "No, I was photographing it." So they let him go. I, on the other hand, was taken down to Area One on South State Street.

Adam | The unexpected consequences of this piece certainly echo a work such as Chris Burden's **Dead Man**, in which he was lying in the middle of La Cienega Blvd. This was in the early '70's in Los Angeles; there was more of an imminent danger there of something happening. Burden was still surprised to be arrested for causing a false emergency to be reported at a time of similar social turmoil. The student protests were in full swing at that time and so the authorities had a heightened sense of what might seem to them to be off; or, on the other hand, there should have been a sensitivity to unexpected behavior on the part of people who didn't seem to be presenting a direct kind of terrorist threat. But Burden was arrested and made the officers very upset when they asked him what he was doing and he said he was making a piece of sculpture, and they didn't like that. They took him in. But his case was, also, ultimately dismissed. Although he talked about the apprehension that this whole experience produced in him. So I think it's interesting the way that art making at certain points in time almost accidentally intersects with a prevailing kind of public sentiment, especially on the part of authorities, to deal harshly with perceptions of transgressive behavior. Even if that is something as innocuous as drawing a line with a Crayola on the sidewalk. And, I think, it's important to state that the response... the reason the police were originally alerted was because a number of the merchants on State Street were looking out of their shop windows and saw Mat making this line and felt this was disrupting their business somehow. We're still not quite sure how. In fact perhaps it might have drawn in more business. Nonetheless, it rippled the surface of commerce enough to make this into a bookable event. It should be noted that there were a couple of police officers who thought that this was really ludicrous.

Mat | That I'd been taken in? Oh, absolutely. The first question that I was asked by one of the largest men was: "So, what have you been doing?" And, at that time, this was right at the beginning of the process and I was feeling quite uncomfortable, I said, "I drew a crayon line along the sidewalk on State Street." He seemed incredulous. He just looked at the arresting officer...

Adam | Whom he also towered over...

Mat | ...and there was this moment of silent discomfort. So he turned back to me and asked me if I had anything on me. And, cuffed, I couldn't actually reach for the Crayola, but one of the officers pulled them out and said, "He's got these Crayolas on him." It was, perhaps, one of the more surreal moments and if I wasn't so terrified I would have probably laughed. Which wouldn't have helped.

Corey | What did he say to the other police officer?

Mat | The first thing he said was as he looked down at me: "So, we finally arrested a white guy." I had no idea what that meant. He swiveled to confront the arresting officer and said, "You've gotta be fucking kidding me." That guy was looking at the floor and drawing little circles with his feet. Then the big guy said, "Take the cuffs off." And my arms were released, it was actually really uncomfortable. Then they cuffed me to a table. There's a table with a plexi screen dividing it, you know, half way down. So all the officers were on one side of this plexi screen and I was on the other. One after the other, officers were being told of this arrest at the front of the station and they were coming through. By the end of it there must have been eight, ten officers all sitting on the other side of this table asking me about growing up in England; what was performance art? What project I was going to be doing next?

Adam | And where a good place to get a pint of Guinness was in the city?

Mat | "What's your favorite beer?" I said "Well, I like a Guinness." ... Oh! Then they were telling me the best places to get a Guinness and it turned into an hour and a half discussion. At the end of this a young officer was very keen to give me a lift back to Columbia College, where I work, so that he could pull up to the college with his lights on and I would get out of the back of the car in front of the students. When we walked out and Adam and my wife were waiting for me he was visibly disappointed. Interestingly, they did feel that they needed to issue me a citation for defacing public property, in which several weeks later we were asked to show up for (in court). In fact, it turns out, they cited me with the wrong thing because to be guilty of the defacement of public property it has to be a permanent mark.

Corey | Have you thought about expanding the group? Including maybe people of color, women? How do you feel about that?

Adam | Well, the nature of the project is, by definition, a collaborative one, and one that involves the participation of a pretty wide and ever expanding number of individuals. In fact, we've done a piece that specifically involves another person: the piece **Well Groomed**, in which one of our peers, Max King Cap, and the two of us exchange facial hair over an extended period of time. We literally groom ourselves; shape our facial hair so that at some point we each look like the other, as far as what the hair that's growing on our face actually looks like. And in a number of other projects we've enlisted the help of fabricators or collaborators who have helped us with either technical or material aspects of the project. They are always credited on the website as collaborators and participants. So in a sense we already do include a lot of other people. I think the dynamic would obviously change if we absorbed a permanent additional member. And I think we like the fact that we can be relatively light on our feet with just a one-to-one kind of interaction. It becomes remarkably more complicated if you are working with two other people rather than one. And, I don't anticipate, and Mat may disabuse me of this, but I don't think he does either, that we will add a permanent third member to the project. But we're actually embarking on a new stage of the project, which is the series of proxy activities. Not something that we really envisioned ourselves, but that was the result of a number of different people

approaching us to see if they could execute projects under the aegis of *Industry of the Ordinary* on our behalf. And those proxy projects are about to start taking place. One pair of artists is going to be taking a flag, the *Industry of the Ordinary* flag, out West and doing whatever they feel is appropriate with it on their journey and, ultimately, they plan to throw it into the crater at Mount St. Helens as another kind of sacrifice or offering to whatever entity they view resides within that recently active volcano. Another project that is in the offing involves a former student of ours who is currently in Italy. He bought a soccer referee's outfit complete with "caution" and "sending off" cards, the yellow and red cards. And he's going to be cautioning or sending off tourists in Florence depending on their particular modes of behavior and dress. There are also several others that potentially are going to be taking place. And, in fact, anyone who's reading this is more than welcome to submit their ideas for proxy projects to us at the website.

Corey | Apart from religion, is there a larger ideological position that informs the *Industry of the Ordinary* projects? Would you say that your politics are to the left of center?

Adam | I think that for me, the idea of ideology is, again, as with the idea of religion, a quite narrow kind of definition. What I, certainly, am interested in is the notion of creating work that makes an imprint in peoples' consciousness or sub-consciousness and changes the way, even in a very small and incremental way.

And obviously, this goes back to the idea of the ordinary, to take aspects of everyday life and alter them so that they have a kind of zing to them that people may have not ascribed to dealing with ordinary things. Like dealing with one's clothes, one's wardrobe, as in a piece that we made (**For Bas Jan Ader, Charles Ray+Erwin Wurm**).^{p12} Or any number of other everyday activities that somehow, given the experience of particular works, viewers won't think about as ordinary acts in quite the same way. I think it's a bit pompous to say that we have an ideology or that we even hope to change the way that people act in the world. I mean art, for the most part, is a useless activity.

Corey | You did a piece called "Vote for Me"...

Mat | It's actually called **Democracy**.^{p20}

Corey | But the manifestation of the piece is a neon sign that reads "Vote for Me" both in English and in Arabic.

Adam, Mat | Yes.

Corey | ...now that seems directly linked to current political events. The controversial events of 2000, through which, for all intents and purposes, Bush was elected by the Supreme Court. Officially. How much do current events play into your work?

Mat | That piece was created out of the 2004 campaign as it led up to the election, when electoral signs were suddenly everywhere and unavoidable. It seemed appropriate to make our own electoral sign but with our own approach. You know, what would an electoral sign look like if *Industry of the Ordinary* were running for office? And it might simply say, VOTE FOR ME. The piece developed and became more pointed and, I think, much more successful when we had it translated into Arabic. I think that was a really very satisfying piece that wasn't initially thought of as being specifically about the Iraq War or in Arabic. But it made sense to have it translated given the events that we've seen unfold in the last couple of years.

Adam | I think that it's important to mention the third part of that work which is these offset printed posters that use the same Arabic text, saying Vote for Me. Which in Arabic is pronounced "sahwhet li ajli". But it becomes a beautiful object, even more so than the neon, when these offset posters were placed in a very tall stack in the middle of the floor when we showed them as part of the *A Perfect Union ... More or Less* show at the Renaissance Society. Subsequently the posters have been disseminated in various ways, through the website and given out and put up. It's a beautiful object, even though it's completely unintelligible. Which, in a certain sense, is part of the work. The fact that most people probably could identify it as Arabic, but no one, unless they were a native speaker, would be able to translate it and understand what it meant.

Corey | Nevertheless, do you believe that your art or any art for that matter, can really change things in the world? I'm thinking of Sartre's doubt whether *Guernica*, the famous painting by Picasso, won a single supporter for the Spanish cause.

Adam | Well, certainly, to go back to what I was saying, the idea that art can ultimately change anything, that it has any primary function as a vehicle or a mechanism to shift people's ideologies in any appreciable form is fairly spurious and anecdotal at best. But, again, I'd like to reiterate the fact that what I am interested in is an incremental approach to changing the way that people look at the world and at themselves in the world. And if there's even a slight change ... not even a change, but if we can attach our activities to people's perceptions of the world and themselves, so that they become integrated into the ongoing structure of the way that perception takes place then, I think, that we've been successful.

Mat | I believe that we're on the right track because, since we began working together, *Industry of the Ordinary* has slightly altered the way I look at the world and the way I make art. Art is a selfish thing to do and there's nothing wrong with that. I just hope that people enjoy what we do and our audience builds over time. But any grander notion of our efficacy is ground to tread upon lightly.

Adam | I think maybe we could finish with a quote by John Cage, which I think is appropriate to our activities, in which he says: "I can't understand why people are afraid of new ideas. I'm afraid of the old ones."

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