

**Text from *Industry of the Ordinary* 12x12 show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
by curator Dominic Molon**

The artists' collective Industry of the Ordinary, comprised of Adam Brooks (American, b. 1959) and Mathew Wilson (British, b. 1967), investigates the everyday consequences of art, politics, and religion through performative works and other projects that typically involve direct engagement with the public. The neon works presented here—*Democracy* and *Democracy (Arabic)*, both 2004—feature the words “Vote for Me” in English and Arabic. These works suggest the fair and equal consideration of different voices and cultural perspectives implied by a democratic society and political system. Though created during the 2004 US presidential election, they are still highly relevant to the current US political climate and presidential election this November.

Lit only by the neon works and theatrically concealed behind a curtain, the 2008 photograph titled *Affair (Industry of the Ordinary solicit a couple having an extra-marital affair to sit for a portrait, in exchange for a romantic night at a hotel)* evokes an atmosphere of secrecy and discomfort made even more unsettling by the nudity of the subjects, the concealment of their identity with masks, and the starkly frontal composition. Together, the works allude to the anxiety associated with the voting booth (and by extension, the US democratic process) as well as the complex relationship between public and private notions of morality and citizenship.

The exhibition also features a performance component—what the artists consider a social sculpture—that was staged at the museum during the preview event and to which the lab coats hanging in this space refer. Dressed in the lab coats on view in this gallery, the collective asked visitors to participate in a group photograph wearing silk-screened T-shirts emblazoned with the statement “Just Say No to Theocracy.” This action questions the legitimacy and appeal of government systems throughout the world and history that are or have been dictated by a specific religion or faith.





