

**Simon & Tom Bloor**  
**The Ballad of Gunpowder Joe**

**MOT International, London**  
**17 November - 16 December 2007**

“At all events, we return you blessings for curses; and pray that you may soon return to that industry, and those sober manners, for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished”. These were the parting words in an open letter to the people of Birmingham by Joseph Priestly before leaving for America after the, so-called, Priestly riots. Also known as Gunpowder Joe for his inflammatory phraseology, Priestly was a chemist, theologian, philosopher and educator whose radical stance towards the established religious & political authorities sparked off several days of rioting in 1791. Most of the violence was directed against the property of Birmingham’s liberal intelligentsia, including Priestly himself and was engineered by corrupt officials. These events culminated in Priestly leaving the city, never to return.

Simon and Tom Bloor have had a long running interest in history’s social radicals and their relationship with specific places. For their first solo exhibition at MOT they turn to their own city of Birmingham and present a body of work influenced by research into these events and the writings of Joseph Priestly. Like Priestly, who embraced many disciplines, the Bloors do not limit themselves to one particular medium and the Ballad of Gunpowder Joe will include a neon text, several works on paper and two sculptures. Crossing the boundaries between design, philosophy and social history the work of Simon & Tom Bloor moves beyond art’s continued fascination with the aesthetics of Modernism and into the uncertain territory of something more engaged with its social structures.

Simon & Tom Bloor live and work in Birmingham, UK and are represented by MOT International. They were selected for Art Futures 2007, Bloomberg Space, London and have recently completed the project Thin Cities, Platform for Art, Piccadilly Line, London Underground, London (2007). Recent solo projects and exhibitions include; Modes of Civic Life, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (2006); Various Positions, Het Wilde Weten, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2006) and The wide world is all about you, Ikon Gallery offsite project, Birmingham (2006). They have been included in various group exhibitions, including; Strategic Questions, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria & De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2006); Merz Magazin 4, Bregenz, Austria (2006); The Artist with Two Brains (2005); Public Structures, 2nd GuangZhou Triennial, China (2005) and Romantic Detachment, Grizedale Arts, PS1, New York (2004).

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