R. Luke DuBois:
Love in the Time of Data
“Just as data visualization helps us to make sense of the facts of our world, art made with data lets us look critically at those facts,” notes the critically acclaimed artist, composer, and engineer R. Luke DuBois.

Like many contemporary artists, DuBois’ work resists easy categorization, encompassing filmmaking, printmaking, collaborative performance, computer programming, and data mining as well. Keenly aware of our relationship to the numerous streams of data that surround us, DuBois seeks to explore how we make sense of it, and how, in the process, we make sense of ourselves. The elegant pair of works brought together in this exhibition seek to explore strategies for connecting with one another in a world that asks us to tailor our behaviors to accommodate new technologies, and in which personal subjectivity defies and escapes the regimented categories we may seek to impose upon it.

* A More Perfect Union is a map that provides an alternate version of the 2010 census, and reveals how the inhabitants of particular cities understand themselves, based upon personally-descriptive data provided through dating websites. *Fashionably Late for the Relationship* is a 63-minute video that provides a dreamscape of sorts exploring the contrasting syncopation between the life of an individual and that of the city at large. Developing a poetics of the personal in a technologically saturated society, DuBois, through his playful artistic interventions, strives to capture an authentic expression of the self, even as it fends off a dissolution into bits.

R. Luke DuBois (b. 1975, New Jersey) is a multidisciplinary artist who explores the temporal, verbal, and visual structures of cultural ephemera. His series Hindsight is Always 20/20 was featured at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, CO. In February 2016, he participated in TED, presenting a talk on his “Insightful human portraits made from data.” Recently the subject of the solo exhibition *Now*, DuBois’ work has been exhibited at Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME; the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art, OH, among other venues. He holds a Doctorate in Music Composition from Columbia University and was a member of the musical performance group the Freight Elevator Quartet (FEQ).

This exhibition was curated by Anne Collins Goodyear. It was organized by Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity*.

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Fashionably Late for the Relationship
2007–2008

Digital video (color, sound, algorithmically time-compressed and edited) of 72-hour performance
63 minutes
Edition of 10
Music in collaboration with Todd Reynolds
Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York

This intriguing work, which depicts a young woman preparing to meet her lover, represents a collaboration between the performance artist Lián Amaris and R. Luke DuBois. During a three-day holiday weekend on a set in New York City’s Union Square, Amaris meticulously prepared for a rendezvous, losing herself in thought, speaking on the phone, applying makeup, and selecting an outfit, elongating each minute of activity into an hour. After shooting the performance with a thirty-person film crew and four high-definition cameras, DuBois used a visual averaging computational process to recompress the performance into sixty-three minutes of elapsed time.

The result is a poetic interplay of private and public, as the rhythm of the city echoes that of the body. As the artist has observed, the traffic lights visible in the background seem to evoke a human heartbeat as they speed up from intervals of a minute to a second. The vintage props, the spinning of hour hands on the face of a clock, and the disintegration of a still-life arrangement of fruit remind us both of the passage of years and of centuries, even as this contemporary work echoes the visual tropes of the old masters. The past, present, and future seem to collapse into one another, evoking the emotional intensity of love itself, and the powerful, sometimes overwhelming, connection it exerts between the self, the other, and the world beyond.
R. Luke DuBois
A More Perfect Union: USA, No. 4
2011/2017
Inkjet print on canvas
Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York

Responding to the 2010 United States Census, DuBois devised an alternate “portrait of the nation” based on socio-cultural data rather than socio-economic data. Using old Rand McNally trucker atlases as his visual guide, DuBois playfully considered what various individuals in each locale are themselves seeking to find. As the artist explains: “From my perspective, A More Perfect Union is a lyrical study about how Americans talk about themselves in order to feel loved or in the hope that they might be loved.” After joining 21 online dating sites and downloading approximately 19 million profiles, DuBois analyzed the resulting data and identified the term most commonly associated with a particular place. Thus, New York City becomes, “Now,” and Washington, D.C. becomes “Interesting.” In creating this new “picture” of the United States, DuBois recasts the traditional purposes of the political census that is readily taken for granted by most citizens, asking us to rethink how we might define ourselves as individuals and as a nation.
R. Luke DuBois:
A More Perfect Union: USA, No. 4 (detail)
2011/2017
Inkjet print on canvas
Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York.
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