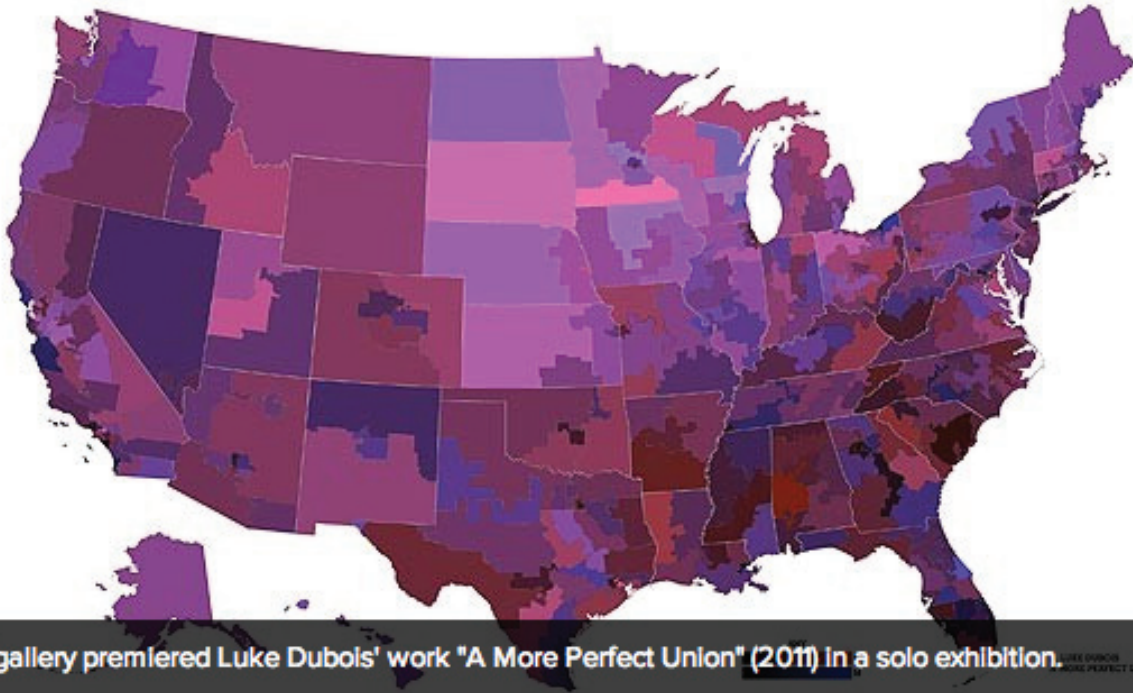




Online Dating: Maps Show Where Happiest, Kinkiest People Live

By Ki Mae Heussner via GOOD MORNING AMERICA, April 6, 2011



Bitforms gallery premiered Luke Dubois' work "A More Perfect Union" (2011) in a solo exhibition. LUKE DUBOIS
A MORE PERFECT UNION
courtesy bitforms gallery nyc

Ever wonder where the happiest singles in the country live? Or where people are more likely to describe themselves as "crazy," or "lonely," or "shy"?

Using data from more than 19 million online dating profiles, New York artist and performer R. Luke Dubois created a series of color-coded maps showing how Americans in different parts of the country describe themselves when they're looking for love.

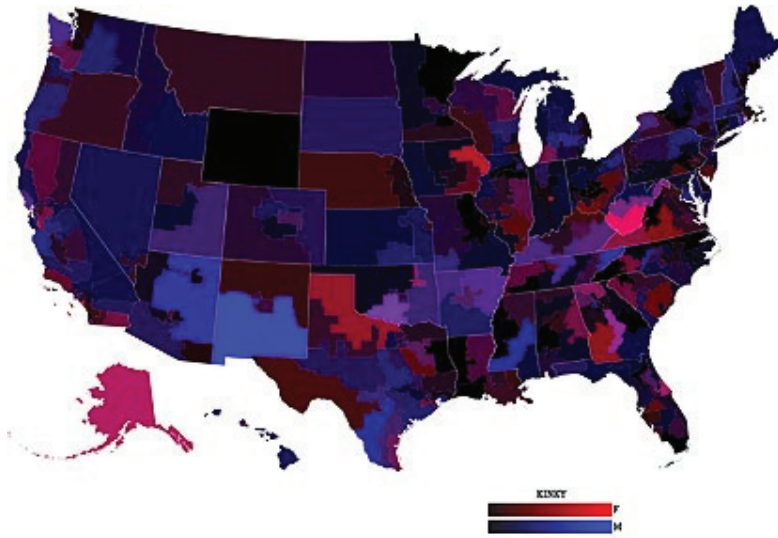
Women in parts of Oklahoma, Florida and South Carolina, and men in parts of Texas, the Midwest and Wyoming, for example, are more likely to use the word "lonely." Women in West Virginia and men in parts of the Southwest are more apt to say "kinky." Online daters who live on the coasts seem to drop the word "happy" with a bit more frequency. Other maps show "the sexy," "the bored" and even "the virgins."

But in his project, called "A More Perfect Union," Dubois went even deeper, sorting the profiles by ZIP code and assigning one word to each town and city in the country, to create his very own "road atlas" of the United States.

A More Perfect Union: Lonely, 2011. Courtesy bitforms gallery, NYC.

New York City in a word? "Now." Washington, D.C.? "Interesting." Phoenix, Ariz. takes its word "Diamondback" from the name of its hometown baseball team. And daters in Montgomery, Alabama, are drawn to the word "conservative."

Dubois said he included about 20,000 unique words in his maps, but cautioned that the maps aren't intended to be taken literally – they're meant to give the country a broad window into how people describe themselves and the people they want to be with.



A More Perfect Union: Kinky 2011. Courtesy bitforms gallery

Online Dating Requires Complex Act of Self-Identity, Artist Says

"If you don't do online dating, you assume everyone says the same thing, e.g. 'I'm nice, cute, smart, fun,'" Dubois said in an e-mail.

"But it turns out that the real objective of an online dating profile is to stand out from the crowd and get noticed, so people talk openly and honestly about their aspirations, their hobbies, their life history. It's really fascinating."

To gather the data, Dubois joined 21 online dating sites, from mainstream Match and eHarmony to more niche sites like JDate, ChristianMingle and AsiaFriendFinder. He started the project in 2008 but released the project in January to coincide with the official 2010 U.S. Census.

The real census determines the country's composition by income, age, jobs and backgrounds, but Dubois said he wanted to take a closer look at other kinds of information that describes American identity.

"Online dating requires a very specific, complex act of self-identity: you have to describe yourself for the express purpose of being liked," he said. "And you have to describe the person you want to be with in enough detail to (hopefully) make a connection."

Red, Blue Online Dating Maps Riff on Politically-Themed Election Year Maps

Mapping online data not only shows the language Americans use to describe themselves, it provides a "metaphorical critique" of the real census, he said.

"What if we could make red-state blue-state maps based not on political hot-button topics, but on real factors of identity, like how many of us are shy, or happy, or lonely?" he said. "What would that tell us about our country and how we actually think about ourselves?"



A More Perfect Union: New York City, 2011. Courtesy bitforms gallery