

For Immediate Release
Contact: Laura Blereau
press@bitforms.com
(212) 366-6939

bitforms gallery
529 West 20th St.
New York NY 10011
www.bitforms.com

R. Luke DuBois

New York debut of *Hindsight is Always 20/20*

First United States solo exhibition with composer, artist, and performer R. Luke DuBois

He enjoys taking aspects of culture and subjecting them to a kind of gestalt analysis, where viewers gain an overview of a massive amount of material in a reduced form.

-Holly Willis, *Daily Insider*

Politics As Usual

September 12 – October 11, 2008

bitforms gallery, 529 West 20th Street, NYC

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Opening Reception: Fri. September 12, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Artist Talk at bitforms gallery: Sat. October 4, 4:00 PM

bitforms gallery is pleased to announce a string of concurrent exhibitions this Fall with artist R. Luke DuBois (b. 1975, United States). *Politics As Usual* marks the artist's first solo gallery exhibition and the New York debut of his *Hindsight is Always 20/20* series, which tours in Denver, Minneapolis and Philadelphia. Also debuting will be *SSB*.

Commissioned by the City of Denver this summer during the U.S. Democratic National Convention, DuBois premiered forty-three free standing outdoor light boxes in the *Hindsight is Always 20/20* series. The same day in Minneapolis–St. Paul, host city of the U.S. Republican National Convention, an exhibition showcasing the forty-three letterpress prints opened at the Weisman Art Museum.

Later in the fall, DuBois' light boxes will travel to the National Constitution Center at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia where they will unveil on National Public Lands Day, September 27.

About *Hindsight is Always 20/20*:

Hindsight is Always 20/20 examines the history of American political discourse through the metaphor of vision. Drawing from the annual State of the Union (SOTU) addresses given by Presidents to Congress, 'Hindsight' consists of a single Snellen-style eye chart for each president who gave SOTU addresses. Instead of the typical characters present in an eye chart, the piece employs words drawn from their speeches, presented in order of most frequent (top line) to least frequent (bottom line) word. The result is a startlingly clear snapshot of the lexicon of each presidency, containing a mix of historically topical keywords and rhetoric unique to each president and the time period in which they served in office.

About *SSB*:

SSB is a generative sound work that uses a recording of soprano Lesley Flanigan singing the American national anthem. The recording is then digitally stretched to last four years (the length of an American election cycle), providing a sonic 'electoral clock'. The resulting sound, with its repetition, echo, and microtonal nuance, is reminiscent of an adhan, or Islamic call to prayer.

Biography

R. Luke DuBois is a composer, artist, and performer who explores the temporal, verbal, and visual structures of cultural ephemera. Stemming from his investigations of "time-lapse phonography," his recent work is a sonic and encyclopedic relative to time-lapse photography. Just as a long camera exposure fuses motion into a single image, his work reveals the average sonority, visual language, and vocabulary in music, film, text, or cultural information. Exhibitions of his work include the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Spain; 2008 Democratic National Convention, Denver; Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis; San Jose Museum of Art; National Constitution Center, Philadelphia; Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art, Daelim Contemporary Art Museum, Seoul; Sundance Film Festival; and Sydney Film Festival. An active visual and musical collaborator, DuBois is the co-author of Jitter, a software suite for the real-time manipulation of matrix data. He appears on nearly twenty-five albums both individually and as part of the avant-garde electronic group The Freight Elevator Quartet.

In a feat of mind-boggling genius (or supreme tedium), 30-year-old geek savant R. Luke DuBois has digitally smooched a lifetime...

-Christopher R. Weingarten, *SPIN*

For more information please visit:

<http://bitforms.com/dubois>
<http://www.dialogcity.org/>
<http://www.weisman.umn.edu/exhibits/DuBois/home.html>
<http://constitutioncenter.org/>
<http://hindsightisalways2020.net>
<http://lukedubois.com>

Concurrent exhibits of *Hindsight is Always 20/20*:

Philadelphia: National Constitution Center in partnership with Independence National Historical Park will feature forty-three outdoor light boxes. Opens Sep 27

Minneapolis: Weisman Art Museum debuts complete set of forty-three letterpress series prints as an acquisition. Aug 23, 2008 – Jan 4, 2009

Denver: Democratic National Convention premieres forty-three outdoor light boxes as part of a public commission for the City of Denver. Aug 23 – 29

Denver: Robischon Gallery features a selection of prints in *Dialog:Denver*. Aug 16 – Sep 20

Directions to bitforms gallery

Nearest subway is the C/E to 23rd St in Chelsea

bitforms gallery is devoted to emerging and established artists who embrace new media and contemporary art practice.

Statement by R. Luke DuBois on *Hindsight is Always 20/20*

Consider the following two pieces of information:

1. The President's Annual Message to Congress, commonly referred to as the State of the Union address, is given each year by a sitting President of the United States. Mandated by the U. S. Constitution, the message was historically delivered in written form until the rise of mass media encouraged the switch to a broadcast oral address. In it the President articulates the accomplishments of the executive branch over the previous year and the legislative aims of the Presidency for the year to come. The address is arrayed in its early years with statistical trifles (many Presidents would "pad" their messages with tables summarizing items such as military capacity, the executive budget for the year, or even data from the most recent census), and in later years with platitudes ("The State of the Union is sound!"). Nonetheless, the address is in many ways the best original source material for elucidating the concerns and anxieties apparent in the national zeitgeist for a given time.

2. The Snellen Chart of optical acuity, developed in 1862, contains eleven blocks of letters arrayed in rows of decreasing font size and increasing letter count (for a total of 66 glyphs). The aim of the chart is to allow optometrists to assess a patient's vision by seeing how far away they need to stand in order to read different lines of the chart unaided. The smallest row that can be read without corrective lenses at a distance of twenty feet from the chart is used to determine the vision ratio for that person (e.g. 20/20).

Hindsight is Always 20/20 takes the State of the Union address from each presidency and sorts them according to word frequency, generating a Snellen eye chart for each president, with the more frequent words in larger typeface at the top of the chart and the less frequent words towards the bottom. The 66-member word lists for each presidency are designed to draw out the most unique and contemporary vocabulary used by the president in his speeches; words that appear in the majority of speeches (e.g. "united", "states", "the", "his", "her", "am") are cancelled out, as are any words that appear in a previous administration's chart. As a result, the list contains words that are not only important in a given presidency but also au courant in terms of lexicon and contemporary context.

The forty-one presidencies to have State of the Union addresses (William Henry Harrison and James Garfield, alas, died before they could submit a message to Congress) each have their own eye chart light box. Additional eye chart information appears in the margins concerning the use of the chart as a testing device.

The aim of the piece is to make a statement about the perennial political metaphor of vision, without which much of the rhetoric of presidential politics quickly deflates. The choice of words employed by a given presidential administration to articulate its message is in many ways its signature. Looking back, we can use this vocabulary to test the metaphorical eyesight of the nation.