

Bowdoin College Museum of Art Commissions New Media Artist R. Luke DuBois to Create Portrait of Civil Rights Activist DeRay Mckesson, Premiering at Artist's Exhibition this Spring

Opening March 2016, the solo exhibition will feature a video-based portrait of the activist and Bowdoin College alumnus, alongside a wide selection of DuBois's works across media exploring the politics of American identity

Robust series of public programming, including keynote lecture by the artist and talks exploring new media, to be presented in coordination with the exhibition

Brunswick, Maine, February 25, 2016—The Bowdoin College Museum Art (BCMA) will present a solo exhibition by New York-based “new media” artist R. Luke DuBois, featuring a new portrait commissioned by BCMA of Black Lives Matter and Campaign Zero activist DeRay Mckesson, who is also a current mayoral candidate in Baltimore as well as a Bowdoin College alumnus (class of 2007). DuBois’s simultaneous work as a composer, computer programmer, filmmaker, and installation artist challenges traditional categorization, and his multifaceted approach will be reflected in the forthcoming video-based work that will debut at the BCMA on March 31.

The new commission will be presented as part of the exhibition *R. Luke DuBois – Now*, alongside dozens of DuBois’s works created over the last 15 years. Films, works on paper, installations, video, and sound works will all be included, testifying to DuBois’s prodigious work since the 1990s, which ranges from musical composition and collaborative performance, to large-scale public installations, film, and generative computer works. In coordination with *R. Luke DuBois – Now*, on view at BCMA from March 31 until September 4, the Museum has also organized a robust series of public programs. These include a keynote lecture by the artist; a presentation by Matthew McClendon, curator of modern and contemporary art at the Ringling, and the organizer of *R. Luke DuBois – Now*; gallery conversations led by visiting artist Erin Johnson and Crystal Hall, a member of the College’s digital humanities faculty; and a panel discussion of DuBois’s role in the broad context of new media art featuring Jon Ippolito and Richard Rinehart, co-authors of *Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory*.

“We are proud to bring *R. Luke DuBois – Now* to Bowdoin College, which is made all the more meaningful by DuBois’s groundbreaking portrait of DeRay Mckesson,” remarked Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-Director Anne Collins Goodyear. “As a Bowdoin alumnus making an international impact on contemporary society through his political activism, the commission is doubly important as both a witness to our present moment as a nation and as a part of Bowdoin’s legacy, and we’re honored that it will remain here at the BCMA as part of our permanent collection.”

“As an institution dedicated to exploring new forms of knowledge and modes of communication, we look forward to presenting DuBois’s distinct artistic perspective, which challenges us all to consider complex issues of politics and personal identity,” added Frank Goodyear, Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-Director.

Building on the artist’s interest in how information reflects and shapes our world, the newly commissioned work will draw from online networks and social media to create a reflection of both Mckesson himself and the activist’s most influential modes of communication. Footage of Mckesson addressing topics crowd-

sourced from the Bowdoin student body will be interspersed with data and language drawn from Mckesson's own online presence through Twitter and other social media channels. This time-based portrait will be generative, evolving over time, continually incorporating new material generated by Mckesson's communication about the issues that motivate his own activism.

Originally organized in 2014 by the Ringling Museum of Art, *R. Luke DuBois – Now* will have a special resonance in the BCMA presentation during the 2016 presidential election season, drawing on DuBois's inventive use of political and demographic data in his diverse works.

"I'm continuously fascinated by the political underpinnings of American portraiture, which makes DeRay Mckesson an especially rich subject," said R. Luke DuBois. "As an activist who regularly leverages data and the interconnectivity of online networks to raise awareness about political and social issues, our interests are aligned in a variety of ways which will inform the forthcoming work."

Three dominant themes permeate DuBois's work, including the mining and metamorphosing of data into art, the investigation of temporality, and the construction of contemporary portraiture, or how we represent and conceptualize ourselves and others. These themes will be explored through the presentation of notable works such as *Hindsight is Always 20/20* (2008, commissioned by the Democratic National Convention), *A More Perfect Union* (2010–2011), and *(Pop) Icon: Britney* (2010), among others. Drawing from the annual State of the Union addresses given by presidents to Congress, *Hindsight is Always 20/20* consists of a single Snellen-style eye chart for each president to have given a State of the Union address. 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). 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 during which they served in office.

In his work *A More Perfect Union*, DuBois looks at American self-identity through the medium of online dating services. Culling data from over 20 online dating sites, the work is organized according to the same heuristics as the U.S. Census, sorting dating profiles by Congressional District and subjecting the imagery and text to statistical analysis, revealing a "dating lexicon" of each state. DuBois constructed maps using the words provided by 16.7 million people describing themselves and those they desire—resulting in a romantic atlas of the nation, with keywords from dating profiles in lieu of the city and town names. In the same series, DuBois also designed maps of the entire U.S. that are colored in a "red-state/blue-state" pattern, showing how different adjectives, such as "funny" and "lonely," are distributed across the country. By presenting a range of works from DuBois's multifaceted career in context with one another, *R. Luke DuBois – Now* will demonstrate how DuBois operates at the intersections of the visual, performative, and the time-based arts in a manner that mirrors his audiences' collective 21st-century experience in a world of globalized information.

Programming Highlights for *R. Luke DuBois – Now*

The BCMA is mounting a robust series of public programs in coordination with its presentation of *R. Luke DuBois – Now*. Including artist talks, gallery conversations, curatorial lectures, and panel discussions, the programs will explore the diverse facets of DuBois's practice and its ties to contemporary social, cultural, and political life.

An Artist's View: R. Luke DuBois

March 30, 2016 | 4:30 p.m. | Kresge Auditorium, Visual Arts Center
The artist will discuss his practice in conjunction with the exhibition.

Gallery Conversation: R. Luke DuBois – Now with Erin Johnson

April 5, 2016 | 12 p.m. | BCMA

Erin Johnson, Visiting Artist, leads a discussion about the exhibition.

“R. Luke DuBois: On Art and Performance”

April 7, 2016 | 4:30 p.m. | Kresge Auditorium, Visual Arts Center

Matthew McLendon, curator at the Ringling Museum and organizer of the exhibition, speaks to the role that performance provides for the development of new media work and collaborative art practices today.

Gallery Conversation: R. Luke DuBois – Now with Crystal Hall

April 19, 2016 | 12 p.m. | BCMA

Crystal Hall, associate professor in the digital humanities, leads a discussion in *R. Luke DuBois – Now*, focusing on the artist’s use of digital media.

“Collecting Time”

April 28, 2016 | 4:30 p.m. | BCMA

Jon Ippolito, co-founder of the University of Maine’s New Media Department and Still Water, a new research and development laboratory, and Richard Rinehart, director Samek Art Museum, Bucknell University, will discuss the work of artist R. Luke DuBois in the context of the broader history of new media art, addressing what it means, from philosophical and technical standpoints, to collect, exhibit, and preserve new media art today.

Additional Venues:

The Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL. January 31 – May 4, 2014.

Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA. November 7, 2015 – February 28, 2016.

R. Luke DuBois (born 1975, United States)

R. Luke DuBois is a composer, artist, and performer who explores the temporal, verbal, and visual structures of cultural ephemera. He holds a doctorate in music composition from Columbia University, and has lectured and taught worldwide on interactive sound and video performance. He also contributes to “The Score” section of *The New York Times*’ Opinionator blog, which features the writings of composers on their work and the issues involved in creating music in the 21st century.

He has collaborated on interactive performance, installation, and music production work with many artists and organizations including Toni Dove, Todd Reynolds, Jamie Jewett, Bora Yoon, Michael Joaquin Grey, Matthew Ritchie, Elliott Sharp, Michael Gordon, Maya Lin, Bang on a Can, Engine 27, Harvestworks, and LEMUR, and was the director of the Princeton Laptop Orchestra for its 2007 season.

Recent exhibitions of DuBois’s work include *R. Luke DuBois – Now* at the Ringling Museum of Art (2014); the 2011 debut of *A More Perfect Union* at bitforms gallery, New York; and the 2011 exhibition *Multiplicity* at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, featuring *Hindsight is Always 20/20* (2008). *Hindsight* also toured the U.S. and was on view at the Lawrence Arts Center, Lawrence, KS; the Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS; and the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA; among others. A major live performance project, *The Marginy Parade*, was commissioned in 2011 for the “Prospect.2” art biennale in New Orleans. Additional past exhibitions of his work have included the Insitut Valencià d’Art Modern, Spain; the 2008 Democratic National Convention, Denver; Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis; The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK; San Jose Museum of Art; National Constitution Center, Philadelphia; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland; and Scottsdale Public Art Program; among others.

An active visual and musical collaborator, DuBois is the co-author of Jitter, a software suite for the real-time manipulation of matrix data developed by San Francisco-based software company Cycling’74. He appears on nearly 25 albums both individually and as part of the avant-garde electronic group The Freight Elevator Quartet. DuBois has lived for the last 20 years in New York City. He is the director of the Brooklyn

Experimental Media Center at the Polytechnic Institute of NYU, and is on the board of directors of the ISSUE Project Room. His records are available on Caipirinha/Sire, Liquid Sky, C74, and Cantaloupe Music. R. Luke DuBois is represented by bitforms gallery, New York.

About the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the United States. Collecting commenced over 200 years ago with a major gift from the College's founder James Bowdoin III and his family, which included Gilbert Stuart's magnificent portraits of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The Museum is housed in the landmark Walker Art Building, designed in 1894 by Charles Follen McKim. Located on the historic quadrangle of Bowdoin College, the building is graced by murals by John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Elihu Vedder, and Abbott Thayer. A \$20.8-million renovation and expansion in 2007 provided a stunning setting for objects as diverse as monumental Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud, Iraq; European old master paintings; and works by American modernists. The Museum is the centerpiece of Bowdoin's vibrant arts and culture community and offers a wealth of academic and educational programs. The Museum is also a prominent summer venue for major exhibitions such as *Edward Hopper's Maine* (2011), *William Wegman: Hello Nature* (2012), *Maurice Prendergast: By the Sea* (2013), *Richard Tuttle: A Print Retrospective* (2014), and *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860–1960* (2015).

Fully accessible, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art is open to the public free of charge from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday; 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, and from 1 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

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