

*For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and
Nathaniel Mary Quinn*

October 12, 2018–February 3, 2019

Main Gallery

Opening Reception, October 11, 2018, 6–8pm

For further information and images, please contact
Molly Gross, *Communications Director*, The Drawing Center
212 219 2166 x119 | mgross@drawingcenter.org

October 11, 2018

“Agree not merely to the right to difference but ... agree also to the right to opacity.”

– Édouard Glissant, “For Opacity”



Toyin Ojih Odutola, *Paris Apartment*, 2016–17.
Charcoal, pastel, and
pencil on paper, 59 3/8 x
42 inches. Dean
Collection.

New York – This fall, The Drawing Center presents an exhibition that focuses on three young artists—Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn—who explore diverse identities through portraiture and who do so almost exclusively through the medium of drawing. These artists have entirely distinct stylistic approaches and personal backgrounds but they are connected by the way in which they use drawing to investigate subjecthood as well as its resistance to depiction. Indeed, Burgher, Ojih Odutola, and Quinn embrace drawing because it invests surface with the felt intimacy of touch while nonetheless confirming it to be a malleable and uncertain construct. Ultimately, in the intellectual tradition of French theorist Édouard Glissant, these artists believe that the right to refuse explanation is as integral to the formulation of selfhood as is revelation.

For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn is the first museum exhibition to concentrate on the work of Burgher and Quinn and follows on the heels of Ojih Odutola’s successful 2017 New York debut at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In the case of each artist, older drawings are placed alongside work created expressly for The Drawing Center exhibition to foreground the artists’ sustained and developing dedication to their fields of inquiry. At the same time, the artists’ works are interspersed throughout the exhibition space to allow for dialogue and cross-connections. Whether using a highly refined illusionistic approach (Burgher), a broad range of material techniques and media (Ojih Odutola), or a fractured, composite aesthetic (Quinn) the artists in *For Opacity* explore the relationship between insight and obscurity; what a surface can reveal and what it necessarily withholds. Organized by Claire Gilman, Chief Curator, with Amber Harper, Assistant Curator.

ABOUT ELIJAH BURGHER

The painstakingly-crafted color pencil drawings by Elijah Burgher (b. 1978, Kingston, NY) blend abstraction with representation (typically images of nude men) in a way that literally encodes queer desire. Citing twentieth-century occultism, Burgher creates his precise backgrounds from sigils, private symbols that are readable only to the initiated. In this way, Burgher foregrounds the centrality of meaning while denying interpretation, his evocative yet coolly distanced depictions reinforce the imposed silence that undergirds his subjects' amorous histories.

Solo exhibitions of Burgher's work have been mounted by Western Exhibitions, Chicago and Zieher Smith + Horton, New York. He has also been included in group exhibitions at Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary, Berlin; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, and the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, among others.

ABOUT TOYIN OJIH ODUTOLA

Toyin Ojih Odutola (b. 1985, Ile-Ife, Nigeria) distinguishes herself by the range of materials she uses, including graphite, white and black charcoal, ballpoint pen, pastel, color pencil, and marker, each of which she employs both in the service of articulating her subjects—that is, quite specifically, their variegated skin tones and clothing textures—and as a means of ensuring obfuscation. In Ojih Odutola's hands, the line remains an intentional mark both delineating skin and surface and exposing it as an unstable socially-coded terrain.

In recent years, solo exhibitions of Ojih Odutola's work have been mounted by the Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, GA; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco; the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis; and the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art.

ABOUT NATHANIEL MARY QUINN

Drawings by Nathaniel Mary Quinn (b. 1977, Chicago, IL) are collage-like in their fractured appearance and yet his visages, which combine disparate motifs and materials to create a composite whole, are drawn entirely by hand. Unlike Burgher's more impersonal aesthetic, Quinn brings a palpable intimacy and vulnerability to his portraits that typically find their genesis in individuals from the artist's life, particularly from his traumatic upbringing in the Robert Taylor Homes public housing complex in Chicago. But even as his subjects resonate emotionally, their identity remains protected by and beneath his variegated surfaces.

Quinn has been the subject of solo exhibitions at M+B, Los Angeles; Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Luce Gallery, Torino, Italy; and Pace London. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Taubman Museum of Art, Virginia; the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; the Hall Art Foundation, New York, and the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL, among others

PUBLICATION

To accompany *For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn*, The Drawing Center has produced an edition of its *Drawing Papers* series,

which will include a curatorial essay by Claire Gilman, Chief Curator, and contributions from Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn. In addition, the publication will include the titular essay, “For Opacity,” by Édouard Glissant from his book *The Poetics of Relation* (1990).

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Thursday, October 18, 2018 at 6:30pm, FREE admission

Walkthrough and Reading

Join us for a walkthrough of the exhibition *For Opacity* with artist Elijah Burgher and Claire Gilman, Chief Curator of The Drawing Center, followed by a reading of Selected Performance Scripts, 2012–2018 by artist Gordon Hall with Chris Domenick and Savannah Knoop.

Thursday, December 13, 2018 at 6:30pm, FREE admission

Walkthrough

Join artist Nathaniel Mary Quinn and Claire Gilman, Chief Curator of The Drawing Center for a walk-through of the exhibition.

CREDITS

For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn is made possible by Almine Rech Gallery; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Anderson Cooper; Fairfax Dorn and Marc Glimcher; Stephanie and Timothy Ingrassia; Jack Shainman Gallery; Kathleen Madden and Paul Frantz; Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson; Noel E. D. Kirnon; Thomas Lavin; Fiona and Eric Rudin; Beth Rudin DeWoody and Firooz Zahedi; Salon 94; Neil Tennant; Dr. Daniel S. Berger and Scott Wenthe; Rashid Johnson; M+B; P•P•O•W; Rhona Hoffman Gallery; Half Gallery; and Western Exhibitions.

ABOUT THE DRAWING CENTER

The Drawing Center, a museum in Manhattan's SoHo district, explores the medium of drawing as primary, dynamic, and relevant to contemporary culture, the future of art, and creative thought. Its activities, which are both multidisciplinary and broadly historical, include exhibitions; Open Sessions, a curated artist program encouraging community and collaboration; the *Drawing Papers* publication series; and education and public programs.

LOCATION, HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

35 Wooster Street between Broome and Grand Streets in SoHo, New York.
Gallery hours are Wednesday-Sunday 12pm–6pm, Thursday, 12pm–8pm.
Tickets: \$5 Adults, \$3 Students and seniors, Children under 12 are free, and free admission Thursdays 6-8pm.

The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

212.219.2166 | info@drawingcenter.org | drawingcenter.org

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AT THE DRAWING CENTER

<i>For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn</i>	October 12, 2018–February 3, 2019
<i>Jennifer Wynne Reeves: All Right for Now</i>	October 12, 2018–February 3, 2019
<i>a..is alter(ed): Open Sessions 12</i>	October 12–December 2, 2018
<i>Open Sessions 13</i>	December 14, 2018–February 3, 2019
<i>Winter Term: Center for Urban Pedagogy</i>	February 22–March 24, 2019
<i>Neo Rauch: Aus dem Boden / From the Floor</i>	April 12–July 28, 2019
<i>Open Sessions 14</i>	April 12–June 2019

INSTALLATIONS

<i>Susan York: Foundation</i> in the Lab Corridor	Through February 2019
<i>Inka Essenhigh: Manhattanhenge</i> in the Stairwell	Through August 2019

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Images Available for Reproduction

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Toyin Ojih Odutola, *Paris Apartment*, 2016–17. Charcoal, pastel, and pencil on paper, 59 3/8 x 42 inches. Dean Collection.



Nathaniel Mary Quinn, *King Kong Ain't Got Nothing on Me*, 2013. Black charcoal, gouache, and oil pastel on Coventry vellum paper 86 1/2 x 61 1/2 inches. Collection of Fairfax Dorn and Marc Glimcher.



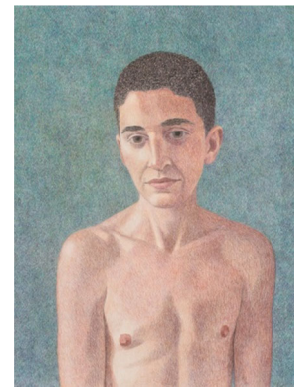
Elijah Burgher, *Eden flag with solar-anal emblems and hexes*, 2017. Color pencil on paper, 33 1/8 x 23 3/8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Western Exhibitions, Chicago.



Toyin Ojih Odutola, *Taking Chances*, 2017. Charcoal, pastel, and pencil on paper, 24 x 19 inches. Private Collection.



Nathaniel Mary Quinn, *Erica with the Pearl Earring*, 2015. Black charcoal, gouache, soft pastel, oil pastel, oil paint, paint stick, and silver oil pastel on Coventry vellum paper 25 1/2 x 25 1/2 inches. Collection of Rhona Hoffman.



Elijah Burgher, *Gordon*, 2015. Color pencil on paper, 24 x 19 inches. Collection of Thomas Lavin.