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
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August 10, 2018

“Agree not merely to the right to difference but … agree also to the right to opacity.”
– Édouard Glissant, “For Opacity”

New York – This fall, The Drawing Center will present 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 will be the first museum exhibition for 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 will be 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 will be 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, 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 NATHNAIEL MARY QUINN
Drawings by Nathaniel Mary Quinn (b. 1977, Chicago) 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 will produce 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
Join artist Elijah Burgher and Claire Gilman, Chief Curator of The Drawing Center for a walk-through of the exhibition.

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

FACEBOOK: /TheDrawingCenter
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AT THE DRAWING CENTER

Terry Winters: Facts and Fictions Through August 12, 2018
Hipkiss: Bulwark Through August 12, 2018
Ellen Berkenblit: Lines Roar Through August 12, 2018

For Opacity: Elijah Burgher, Toyin Ojih Odutola, and Nathaniel Mary Quinn October 12, 2018–February 3, 2019
Jennifer Wynne Reeves: All Right for Now October 12–December 2, 2018
Open Sessions 12 December 14, 2018–February 3, 2019
Open Sessions 13 February 15–March 17, 2019
Winter Term: Center for Urban Pedagogy April 11–July 28, 2019
Neo Rauch: Aus dem Boden / From the Floor April 11–June 2019
Open Sessions 14

INSTALLATIONS

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

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Images Available for Reproduction

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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.


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.