

# ARTFORUM



Elijah Burgher, *Bachelor Machine*, 2013, colored pencil on paper, 19 x 24".

## Elijah Burgher

11.25.13

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10.25.13-12.07.13 *Western Exhibitions*

In a year marked by widespread disillusionment over ineffective systems of government and other bureaucratic power relations, Elijah Burgher's blending of modernism and mysticism proffers enchanting alternatives, through colored pencil works on paper and accompanying paintings on canvas drop cloths used as ritual objects, currently on view in "Friendship as a way of life b/w I'm seeking the Minotaur."

Central to Burgher's magical arts are sigil drawings—symbols designed from the letters that comprise a written desire or incantation—incorporated into elegantly stylized abstractions, such as the priapic *Bachelor Machine* (all works 2013). The drawing is rich with ornament, intricate glyphs, and rectangles of solid (and seemingly symbolic) colors that run between a nude self-portrait with rigid erection along the bottom edge of the page and an abstract shape at the top that might be the "solar anus" that Georges Bataille wrote about in 1931, a surreal symbol that Burgher then affectingly overlays with homoeroticism. Displayed on the back of the same wall, *Bachelor machine, from behind and below* suggests esoteric rituals deconstructed into a flurry of preparatory sigils, colored scribbles, and annotations.

Four unstretched canvases hang freely from the ceiling as banners dividing up the gallery space. It is in the facticity of these works—in their self-evident means of production and use—that the effectiveness of Burgher's propositions extends beyond his private (and often inscrutable) iconography to accommodate the yearnings and projections of a curious public. *A machine to catch ghosts* is believably what its name suggests: some sort of dream catcher made from occult arcana and art-historical trappings, alluding to the psychological potential for viewers to associate and remember through the painted fields of color, and the configurations of black marks that resemble interlocking letters and signs. Burgher's project of enchantment has a generous tone wherein the effects of his conjuring are shared with and readily available to his audience.