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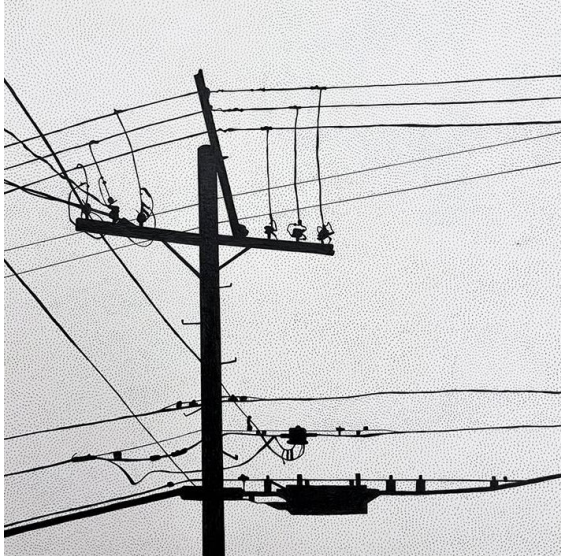
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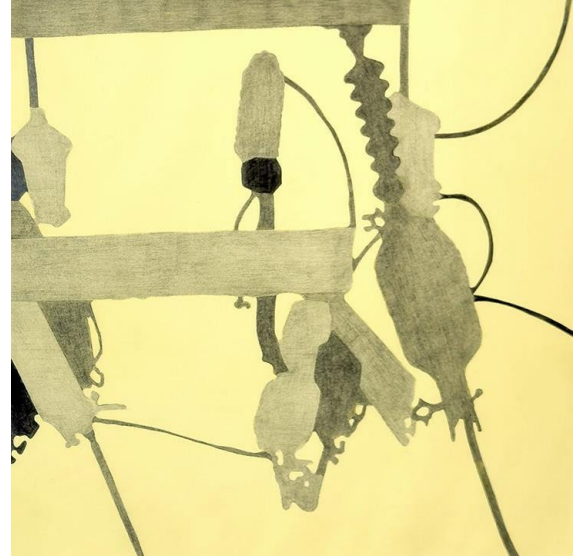
China Adams, “Poles Walkers and a Black Sheep”

by Jody Zellen

CMay Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, May 17 - August 16, 2025



China Adams, “Crisscross,” 2025
micron-pen, graphite, 8 3/4 x 8 3/4”



China Adams, “Sky Frame III,” 2025
gouache, graphite, 20 1/2 x 20 1/2”

In “Poles, Walkers and a Black Sheep” China Adams presents two distinct but related bodies of work: black and white drawings of utility poles, and sculptures made by bedecking geriatric walkers with brightly painted canvas fragments that have been twisted and molded to suggest human forms. Adams talks about the poles as utilitarian yet outdated — they represent an antiquated but still necessary way of delivering electric power to businesses and residential buildings. Such poles can produce sparks (as evidenced by numerous Los Angeles fires) and the wooden versions can even burn themselves. As ubiquitous as they are, they often go unnoticed, but Adams notices them. She studies, photographs, and then draws them with precision, emphasizing their graphic qualities, the filigree of the wires they support, and the shapes they create when viewed against backgrounds of sky. Some have bulbous extensions — transformers — while others appear as elegant grids of black lines. Adams focuses on the relationship between positive and negative space in her drawings, representing the poles and wires as segments of an ongoing continuum.

In “Crisscross” one is drawn to the T-shape of the silhouetted pole just left of center in the square composition. From this anchor, numerous lines flow left and right against a pointillist ground made by tapping a Micron pen against the white paper. Curved and rectangular transformers are intermingled with the wires. In these modest-sized square and rectangular pen and graphite drawings, Adams calls attention to how these sculptural forms interact with the sky as two-dimensional abstractions. In an accompanying suite of drawings, Adams zooms in on a fragment of a pole and focuses her attention on detailing a small section where wires meet transformers. These are rendered in graphite against a light yellow gouache background. In “Sky Frame III,” for example, the shapes are depicted in varying tonalities according to depth and placement, which gives the abstracted work a more realistic and nuanced aura.



China Adams, "Sprawl," 2025, canvas, acrylic paint, unwaxed dental floss, geriatric walker, tennis balls, 56 x 31 x 28"



China Adams, "Lean," 2025, canvas, acrylic paint, unwaxed dental floss, geriatric walker, tennis balls, 40 x 33 x 30"

The pole drawings explore the relationships between point and line by calling attention to their subtle differences. They are rendered as graceful artifacts of the urban landscape. Less graceful but perhaps more intriguing are Adams' sculptures. Painted in vibrant hues of orange, yellow and pink, crumpled pieces of canvas festoon geriatric walkers. While at first appearing casually arranged, the precisely placed canvas pieces obliquely suggest human forms. In "Lean," "Drag," "Hinge" and "Brace," the walker is displayed upright, whereas in "Sprawl" it is on its side. Walkers aid the elderly or infirm. They are designed to provide support. As such, they are sturdy objects, yet Adams presents them as personified and dysfunctional.

The amorphous shaped canvas in "Sprawl," surrounding two legs of an overturned walker, alludes to a person reaching out and calling for help. In the pink hued "Drag," it is easy to imagine a limp body dragging itself across the floor while leaning on the aluminum walker with its fluorescent yellow tennis ball-covered feet for support. This image is at once tragic and comical. "Brace," its canvas painted a dark gray, is the "Black Sheep" of the exhibition's title. All of the walkers reference a slumped and headless body that Adams imbues with expressive pathos. They serve, unsurprisingly, as a reminder of our eventual frailty and need for support.

Thinking about the less than obvious relationship between the poles and the walkers brings up further notions of fragility and strength, vulnerability and stoicism, and the aging mechanisms and infrastructures that transport our bodies and our electricity. As metaphors for cultural, physical and societal stasis, both bodies of work express decline and collapse.

Jody Zellen is a LA based writer and artist who creates interactive installations, mobile apps, net art, animations, drawings, paintings, photographs, public art, and artist's books. Zellen received a BA from Wesleyan University (1983), a MFA from CalArts (1989) and a MPS from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (2009). She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1989. For more information please visit www.jodyzellen.com