

CASEY KAPLAN

121 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001
TEL +1 212 645 7335
FAX +1 212 645 7835
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM
INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

Mateo López: Drawings
March 23 – April 24, 2021

Mateo López (b. 1978, Bogotá, Colombia) presents ten recent works on paper via our Online Viewing Room, simultaneously exhibited at the gallery in our expanded viewing spaces through April 24, 2021.

In March of 2020, after six years in Brooklyn, NY, López returned to his native Bogotá to wait out the quarantine. The familiar act of putting graphite to paper was a comfort in a moment of uncertainty. In his own words, “I just need time, a table – and I can start drawing. When we started quarantine, I was drawing like mad. Like everyone, I felt very emotional. I was trying to release that.”

The included drawings are part of an ongoing installation-based series titled “Old Ideas Stuck in Corners,” begun in 2015. The series consists of a modular reconstruction of a wall made out of multiple pine panels tacked with a myriad of works on paper that are continually rearranged and replaced over time. While the wood partition is currently located in the artist’s vacant Brooklyn studio, López’s works on paper exist as an ever-evolving creative action representative of his studio process.

López’s multifaceted practice spans diverse fields of study, from architecture and design to educational theory and dance. These varied conceptual interests take form in works on paper, sculpture, site-specific installation, and performance. López’s latest drawings revisit the fundamentals of his background in technical draftsmanship and architecture by using ‘line’ as a point of departure.

Taking inspiration from the happenings and objects found around him, the artist riffs on their accidental, uncanny arrangements. “Cane” (2020) offers a surreal duality of form and function. Rendered in graphite and thinly applied watercolor, López’s walking cane contains both a classic crook neck at its top and a human foot at its base. Instead of an assistive walking aid, López’s device absurdly functions as a third leg uniting the action of drawing with the movement of our bodies.

López views his compositions as studies on mechanical movement within the geometries and recurring patterns that exist all around us. Materials conflate, repeat, and renew with each recycled motif, informing the next work. “Origami” (2020) depicts a series of schematic line drawings indicating precise instructions for folding a dress shirt. The work is a refraction of a 2015 sculpture (a three-dimensional shirt made of paper that rested upon a wooden desk) titled “Poeta Writing Desk” (2015), inspired by the design of Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza. Siza’s “poet’s writing desk” was inclined on the left side to mimic the physical lean of the body while writing. Similarly, revisiting a paper sculpture in the shape of a lightbulb from 2015, “Puddle” (2020) depicts a pool of yellow liquid oozing from the metallic base of a lightbulb. López is referencing Joseph Beuys’ experiments with electricity (the genetics of the lemon curiously lighting the bulb) and builds upon the fundamentals of creativity.

The artist’s drawings guide us through experiences based on the principles of play. “Small Fire” (2021) depicts a rendering of the artist’s right hand clutching a single match in his fingers where an incinerated Yves Klein-like hole lies in place of the burning match head. “Pata de Cabra” (2021) presents a drawn, collaged paper switchblade positioned vertically, “literally” slicing the paper substrate. For López, the act of play is grounded in Utopian desires for change, equality, and participation. López’s comical illustrations are deceptively meaningful. With visual puns and aesthetic play, López reveals the conceptual underpinnings of social engagement and gesture within our emotional investment in the everyday.

