Feeling Lonely in Late 1970’s L.A.

Patrick Angus’ drawings are wonderfully awkward. The 26 modestly scaled, pencil-on-paper works at Edward Cella Art & Architecture depict everyday life in Los Angeles in the late 1970’s as well as scenes from mythology and art history.

Rendered in a charmingly blunt style, they capture the loneliness of the city and furtive (or not so furtive) expressions of gay desire.

Angus, who died in 1992, decamped for New York shortly after these drawings were created. Representing the brief L.A. phase of his career, they clearly reflect the influence of David Hockney, with their stolid figures and airless, sun-baked spaces. Perhaps even more than Hockney, Angus was attuned to the sheer blocky awkwardness of bodies in space.

He also had a wry sense of humor. In one street scene, he finds a visual pun in which a man’s cane overlaps a woman’s body to suggest a penis. In another scene at the beach, two naked men share a glance; the more bearish one is still wearing his socks and black dress shoes.

Angus also had a decidedly queer eye for art history. His version of Manet’s “Le déjeuner sur l’herbe” depicts a third man in place of the woman, and all the picnickers are nude. Similarly, his rendering of Theseus and the Minotaur is decidedly priapic.

He went on to document the sometimes murky underworld of gay male desire in NYC, but the work in this lovely exhibition represents a particularly sunny moment.