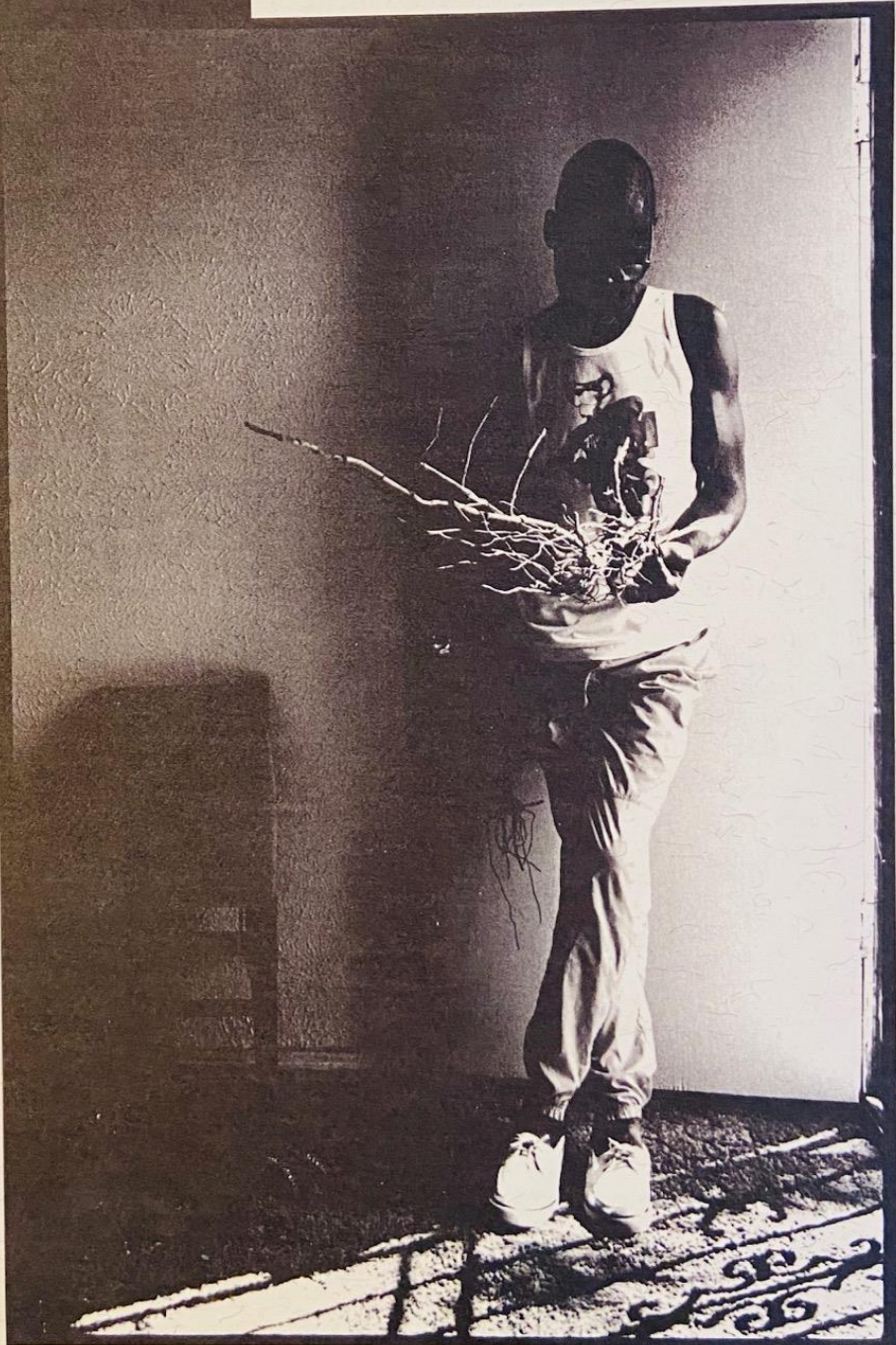


Goldie Paley Gallery  
Moore College of Art & Design

May 25–June 29,  
1994

The Drawings of  
**Willie Wayne Young**



## Willie Wayne Young

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Willie Wayne Young's drawings elegantly contradict our conventional understanding of outsider art. Meticulously rendered and carefully composed, his work exhibits a restrained clarity not often associated with the self-taught artist.

Inspired by a long-standing fascination with very specific plant and animal forms, Young's images are made *real* through his remarkable facility in shading and perspective. Though not academically trained, Young nevertheless had the opportunity to acquire a modicum of formal artistic technique. An avid drawer since childhood, his introduction to art education was an "Art-Course-by-Mail" taken around the age of fifteen. At sixteen, Young studied with Orvil Browning, an artist and counselor at a juvenile home in which Young was briefly incarcerated (an experience that, otherwise, Young is reluctant to discuss). Later, in high school, his obvious talents won him a summer scholarship to the Dallas Museum's art school, where he was under the tutelage of artist Chapman Kelly.

This exposure to formal artistic training, though limited, afforded Young the means to record his vision with an exceptional degree of verisimilitude. His work is informed by countless hours spent collecting and visually analyzing such characteristic items as the roots of the Boidock tree and bird skeletons, but he does not produce "studies" of this ephemera. Instead, he draws from the shapes *suggested* by the roots once they are removed from the earth, and by bones long shed of their skin.

Using these delicate, and usually hidden, structures as a starting point, Young's pencil captures forms that are simultaneously organic and architectural. Rendered on brown paper torn from rolls or on the pages of spiral-bound sketchpads, each of his works is both part of a series and entirely individual. While consistent in subject matter, to a degree suggestive of an almost compulsive fascination with roots and bones, each of Young's drawings is made unique through masterful manipulation of the relationship between figure and ground.

Like American modernist Georgia O'Keeffe, Young's intense scrutiny of natural forms allows him to wrestle evocative abstraction from seemingly pure representation. Like the surrealist Salvador Dali, he exploits his grasp of art's illusionistic devices to make the imagined seem real. In contrast to these artists, and even to the legions of less-prominent artists, Young has created his body of work largely outside an artistic community and, until

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recently, without public recognition. Instead, he has supported himself by shining shoes in a Dallas barbershop, while allowing the output of his creative passion to accumulate in the modest room he uses for both rest and work.

Young is now fifty-two. In this, his first solo museum exhibition, we have the opportunity to view the product of his many years of creative labor. The drawings of Willie Wayne Young display more than the dovetailing of physical talent and heightened visual sensibility associated with great artists, they allow us to consider, with an entirely new roster of insights, the complex interplay between the naive and learned that has marked so much of this century's art.

Matt Singer  
Assistant Director for Curatorial Administration  
May 1994

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### **The Drawings of Willie Wayne Young**

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The exhibition consists of seven untitled notebooks and thirty-two untitled drawings, all dating from 1977 to 1990. Although Willie Wayne Young does not title his drawings, he usually includes his initials and the date of completion in each work's composition. All drawings are pencil on brown or white paper. Young's drawings and notebooks are on loan courtesy of the Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York.

Ten photographs of Willie Wayne Young and his home were taken by Frank Maresca in 1993. The photographs are on loan courtesy of the Ricco/Maresca Gallery.

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