

**Valerie Demianchuk
at George Adams**

Ukrainian-born Valerie Demianchuk's first solo exhibition takes the viewer by surprise; the amount of blank white paper in each drawing is initially disconcerting. Each of the 12 delicate, meticulous works on display depicts a single life-size natural element—for example, a twig, a clump of moss, a cactus or a bird's wing—floating on a vacant ground. The rendered objects are no more than a few inches in diameter, on supports ranging from 29 by 23 inches to 40 by 30 inches. In part, the power of the works lies in what is not there. Although the objects are decontextualized, the barren tableaux in which they are situated strangely evoke their natural environments, as the viewer's imagination is provoked to fill in the blanks.

Examining the mossy root mass in an untitled work from 2000, one is struck by Demianchuk's skill. Her virtuosity with graphite is such that the drawn marks do not retain an index of the artist's hand. It appears as though the images were constructed out of millions of metallic molecules delicately arranged on a pristine surface. Her technique has a photographic quality that mimics antique silver gelatin prints.

The drawings that portray the most intricate objects stand out. In *Spanish Moss* (2000), the artist copies each and every minuscule detail. Thousands of tiny lines, all twisted together, constitute the clump of moss. In *Wing* (2000), every feather and

bit of down on the bird is sensitively reproduced. Her attentiveness to detail suggests that she is captivated by the essence of the natural forms. An untitled drawing of a cactus, from 2001, is rendered so that each line, wrinkle and prickle of the succulent is accounted for.

In these extraordinary drawings, the seemingly banal becomes supernatural. We cannot help but share Demianchuk's passion for the subjects of her drawings and appreciate the exhaustive task of recording the particulars of nature.

—Melissa Kuntz

Valerie Demianchuk: Untitled, 2001, pencil on paper, 30 by 38½ inches; at George Adams.

