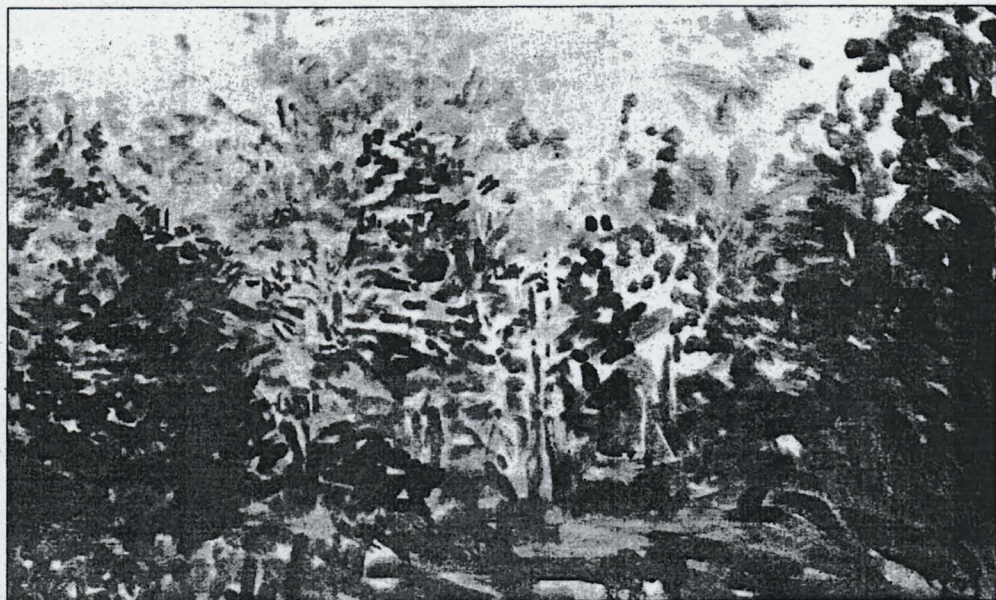


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# Rule-Breaking And Redundancies

Nexus Foundation for Today's Art and the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery showcase a variety of art.

BY GERARD BROWN



Emily Brown's breakthrough work, *The Back Field* (1995), at Nexus Foundation for Today's Art.

## changing the rules of the Game

Nexus Foundation for Today's Art  
137 N. 2nd St.  
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Through Sept. 25

Anyone who has spent time in the company of children or artists will recognize how aptly the title "changing the rules of the Game" describes a central aspect of the creative process. At some point in most games, it seems there comes a point when the rules seem inadequate. One of the players may be about to lose, or the activity may have descended into an monotonous pattern. At that point, children (and certain adults, too) will often start adding rules that enlarge the field, change all the relationships, and revitalize the game. Think of Calvin and Hobbes, the constantly shifting rules they devised for tag, and you get the picture.

For most people, this kind of cre-

ative activity seems to drop off at adulthood. With the possible exception of creative techniques for balancing a checkbook, few people are looking to break the rules and reinvent them.

But artists and curators Kocot and Hatton, by means of the 13 artists they selected for "changing the rules of the Game" at Nexus, eloquently remind us that the willingness to toss everything out the window and reinvent the game is a central part of the art-making process. In a curatorial statement accompanying the show, which continues through September 28, Kocot and Hatton announce their intention to offer a "glimpse into the studio and insight into the workings of the creative mind." To achieve this objective, the curators asked each artist to contribute a statement and photographs of a typical work before and one after a pivotal moment in their career, and the work that turned the corner.

For some, the transition was subtle. Painter Barry Goldberg accomplished

it in an afternoon when he stopped painting on paper mounted on beveled wood panels and painted his *LMNO* on linen mounted on stretcher bars. To Goldberg, the use of stretched canvas suggested a new and different approach to the painting as an object. His work since *LMNO* has taken advantage of the potential to wrap around the edges he had concealed in earlier works and the increased scale available from working on canvas.

For other artists, the change was monumental. Photos of John Phillips' 1983 pre-transitional painting *Touched* do little to prepare us for his recorded sound works, such as his 1985 piece *Sleepers Awake/Near the Screen*. The evolution of Phillips' interest in sound is clarified when he recalls his frustration with the art world at the time of the transition and his interest in "anarchic" music of the period.

Not all changes are strictly formal. Often they are the result of personal

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change or emotional trauma. Stuart Netsky describes his emotional state at the time he made his *Composition with Yellow and Blue* — a scatter of rectilinear Plexiglas forms which resembles nothing so much as a shattered Mondrian — with disarming candor. It is significant that Netsky recognized the work as pivotal in retrospect; we don't often realize the ground is shaking under our feet at the time.

While "changing the rules of the Game" is an unusual and surprising exhibit, its format poses some problems: Some of the artists' statements would have benefited from judicious and sympathetic editing. The decision to group all the statements together in one part of the exhibit, with all the pre- and post-transitional works together in a second area and all the pivotal works in a third, can make the viewer feel like he's jumping through hoops to trace the growth of any one artist. But these technical complaints are relatively minor in light of the unique insight the show offers. At the reception, Hatton mentioned that he had approached the show as "99 percent artists, 1 percent curators."

Apparently, they chose a winning strategy.