



# Breaking the Rules

**Paul Wonner and Theophilus Brown**  
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**Matt Gonzalez**

<b>ISBN</b>	9781785514463
<b>Publisher</b>	Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd
<b>Binding</b>	Hardback
<b>Territory</b>	USA & Canada
<b>Size</b>	9.45 in x 12.01 in
<b>Pages</b>	240 Pages
<b>Illustrations</b>	200 color
<b>Price</b>	\$65.00

- The most in-depth examination of the rich and varied careers of one of California's premier artistic couples
- Features previously unpublished works and new scholarship
- Positions the artists within the context of their peers, both in California and nationally
- Accompanies a major retrospective exhibition at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA (30 April-27 August 2023); travels to the Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA (14 October 2023-7 January 2024; and the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN (28 January-30 March 2024)

In reaction to the widespread pursuit of Abstract Expressionism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Paul Wonner and William "Theophilus" Brown were among the artists in the San Francisco Bay Area who began to re-engage with the visible world, applying the gestural style of action painting to depictions of people, landscapes, and still lifes. Together, the couple aligned themselves with this new direction and became leading practitioners of the style known today as Bay Area Figuration. Over time, both artists' works became less gestural and more overtly representational. Brown became known for his psychologically evocative landscapes with classic bathers, as well as for his lonely urban scenes. Wonner received greatest acclaim for his "baroque" still lifes laden with everyday objects, animals, and flowers.

Published to accompany the most comprehensive exhibition of the artists' work ever mounted, this exquisite publication offers an in-depth study of these trailblazing artists. Exhibition at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA (30 April-27 August 2023) travels to the Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA (14 October 2023-7 Jan 2024); and the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN (28 January-30 March 2024).

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