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Compasses are Banished

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Grace Glueck

Brice Brown has blown apart the rigid scheme of the sestina, the elaborate and tricky verse form invented by the 12th-century French troubadour Arnaut Daniel, to juggle vestiges of symbols (a bird, a heart, a crown, a figure eight and such) so that they produce quirky visual rhythms. Hard-edge lines and shapes inflect softer, squigglier lines and free-form structures behind them, perceived at varying depths.

Color plays a crisp role in Mr. Brown's overall compositions, as in "Deserving Legs' Windstorm," in which green and blue sticks and trailing white fibers hover over a backdrop of deep blue, randomly crossed by straight, thin gold lines.

The device of exploring and then discarding the sestina's rhyme scheme seems to have given Mr. Brown's paintings more snap and definition than the softer, fuzzier works in his show here in 2004 possessed. These paintings have a playful rambunctiousness that's much more appealing.