



NAN MONTGOMERY, "Scalene," oil on canvas, 72" x 96", 1986.

works undermines their stated intent to plumb psychic depths. Academic Surrealists such as Dali and Magritte combined an unarticulated surface plane with Jungian and Freudian symbols arranged in eerie, gut-wrenching compositions to reflect the turbulence and ambiguity that haunts unconscious regions. In contrast, Haner's attempt to mine this inner lode through the use of unconnected discrete cultural signs dredges up little in the way of psychic paydirt.

This is what frequently, although not always, happens when psychological concerns are explored in Washington. The *angst* gets drained out in favor of polish and finish. Washington's art world (as opposed to its bureaucratic world) functions at a relaxed pace in this perhaps too beautiful city. Inhaling Washington's calm, moist air can be harmful to the health of certain art styles, especially those that look deep within.

Price range: \$700 per panel.

Patrick Frank

## Nan Montgomery

Osuna Gallery

406 7th St. NW, 202/296-1963

It's a surprise these days to walk into a gallery and find formal abstraction. Nan Montgomery's cool, precise oil paintings are about as far removed from the turmoil and *angst* of Neo-expressionism as painting gets. Their reductive geometry and carefully considered balance place them in a very different world, where order, harmony, and silent contemplation hold sway.

Although strongly influenced by the neoplasticism of Piet Mondrian and Ilya Bolotowsky, as well as by the hard-edge painters of the 1960s, Montgomery's work is closely linked to the Washington Color School. Extraordinarily pale, near-white hues articulate large planes within her paintings. The subtle interaction between colors

which are just barely gray, pink, or tan is punctuated by sudden rectangles and shafts of pure color. *Timekeeper*, a work on paper, repeats identical compositions three times, changing colors to form a sequence that strongly implies shifting light or the passage of time.

In several works, Montgomery steps tentatively outside the confines of right angles, introducing wedge shapes and hinting at perspective. The resulting tension between the flat surface and implied depth is a promising area of exploration, but Montgomery handles it with mixed results. The serenely overlapping spaces in *Scalene* are overwhelmed by the introduction of a thickly impastoed orange-red triangle at their junction. The impastoed form flattens the planes so severely that spatial possibilities disappear, thereby eliminating the tension that energizes the work.

Montgomery's work invites quiet, unhurried contemplation precisely because it offers certain tensions, usually understated, in both composition and color relationships. Taken with the broad planes of color, whose smooth and even surfaces imply both emptiness and vibrant space, the harmonious balance of these carefully weighted tensions offers a fertile ground for contemplation.

Price range: \$1,000 to \$3,800.

Mary McCoy

## VIRGINIA

### The Billboard Show

Cary Street  
Richmond

Every year, Richmond's festival for the arts, June Jubilee, devises a novel way of making serious art accessible to the public. This year's special event was an artists' billboard show, juried by Melissa