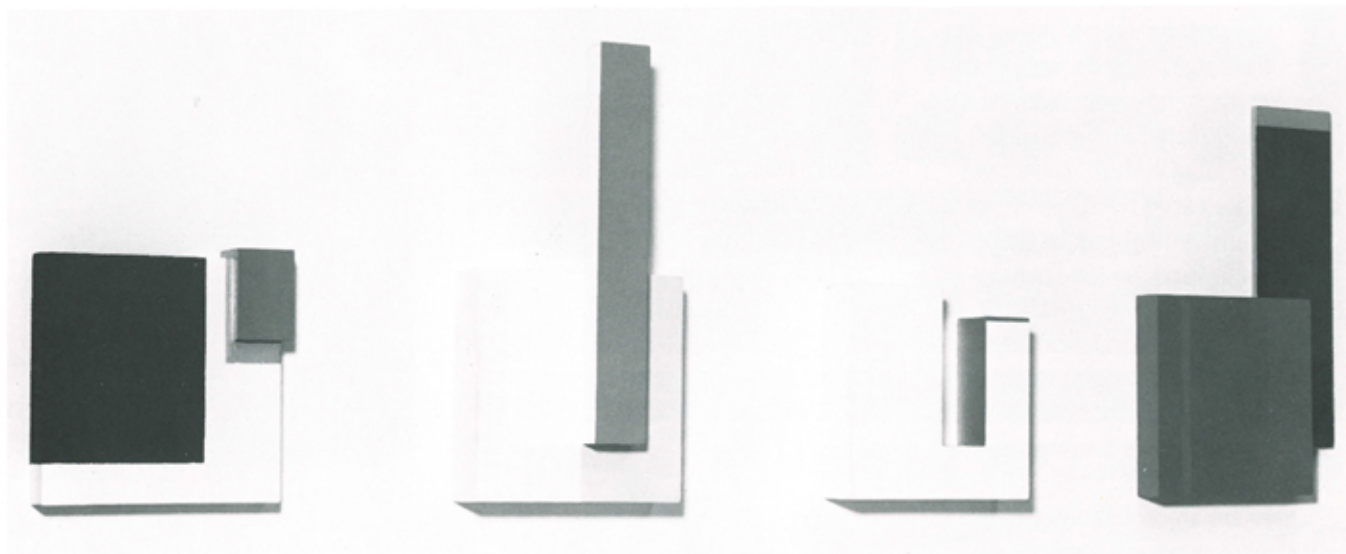


"That Finely Tuned Quality"

NAN MONTGOMERY AT BADER GALLERY

Shelley Pyne-Hanley



NAN MONTGOMERY,
1988

Painted Wood Constructions
oil on wood

Bader Gallery owner Wretha Hanson has selected Nan Montgomery's abstract paintings and constructions for the opening of the fall season (through September 23). Montgomery's work is defiant. It stands for artistic concepts that are generally less explored today.

What are the limits of painting on a two-dimensional surface? If you leave the "gimics" of representation behind, what is left to depict? Are not form and color enough?

Montgomery explains, "Abstract art is much more interesting. I find that it has more messages than literal art. . . I'm interested in stating something simple, not in too many little things getting in the way."

As a gallery that has witnessed and represented so many artistic phases over the last 25 years, it is appropriate for the Bader Gallery to revisit work like Montgomery's—work that continues a dialogue about abstraction which began over thirty years ago.

Nan Montgomery has painted in Washington since the mid-1970s when she participated in a two year intensive program at the Corcoran and before, she studied at Yale and the Boston School of Fine Arts.

Since the early 1980s, Montgomery has shown all over the area: from the Maryland Museum of Art and C. Grimaldis Gallery in Baltimore, to the Corcoran Museum and Gallery K, Osuna Gallery and now Bader Gallery in Washington.

Her large geometric canvases are exceptional for their color and the gradations of dark into dark (like her artistic mentor Ad Reinhardt). Two pieces in the Bader show, "*Thunderbird*" and "*North Light*," demonstrate the spectral subtlety that gives this work its power.

She says, "Shades of color that come together must be like a violin string. A slight difference in dark or light would tip the balance. I'm looking for that tenacity, that finely

tuned quality."

Her comparatively smaller wooden constructions and a piece composed of nine 8" x 8" panels are less finely tuned. The constructions seem more like mounted children's toys, blocky and purely tactile. "*Ad III*," the nine paneled piece, is like a semaphore series. But these flags are in a private language that is so personal, or obscure, that the viewer is left struggling, then shrugging.

Even in her small work, though, Montgomery's clever play with color and deft repetition of simple forms elevate her work beyond the abundance. The Bader Gallery is showing an artist who is undoubtedly one of Washington's best abstractionists. ♦

Bader Gallery.
1701 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
202/659-5515
Prices: \$500-\$4,500.