

By **Mark Jenkins**
February 22



Nina Mickelsen. "Let's Play." (Nina Mickelsen/Martha Spak Gallery)

The centerpiece of Nina Mickelsen's Martha Spak Gallery show, "The Beauty of Imperfection," is a triptych that appears from a distance simply to consist of vertical panels of red, orange and maroon. A closer viewing reveals an asymmetrical array of shapes beneath the uniformly applied pigment. The buried depths belie the pristine skin.

Mickelsen, a native of Finland, attributes part of her style to the cleanliness of Scandinavian modern design. The circle, that geometric ideal, recurs in her work. Screen-printing is often employed to produce regular, repeated dots and rounds in pictures that gently evoke Warhol and Lichtenstein.

Yet the Delaware-based artist disrupts the orderly compositions with messy gestures. One picture stacks eight perfectly round circles with a sloppy one that trails drips. Mickelsen also contrasts blocks of matte color with areas of reflective metal leaf, or embeds rock and marble shards in resin. Although she's not exactly a landscape painter, crags sometimes protrude from her latter-day pop art.

Nina Mickelsen: The Beauty of Imperfection Through Feb. 28 at Martha Spak Gallery, 40 District Sq. SW.