

Elaine Reichek

ZACH FEUER GALLERY

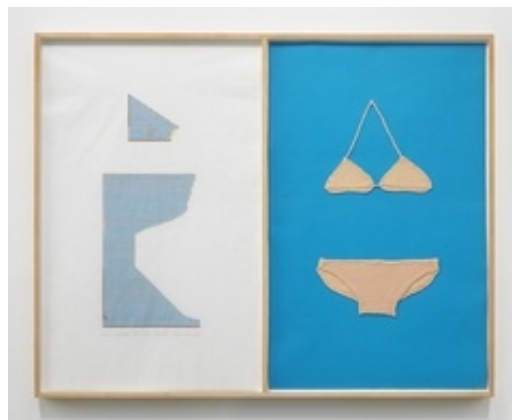
548 West 22nd St

November 7–December 21

Elaine Reichek's work proceeds through semantic slippage and an incessant collapse of high art into craft. Spanning from 1972 to 1995, this modest retrospective plumbs those structures—mediumistic, discursive, and otherwise—whose constraints condition meaning. The works' sharp feminist bent, if subtle, resists Conceptualism's self-reflexive remove, opening onto larger questions of gender, obsolescence, and the camera's gaze.

Four raw canvas paintings, all untitled and dating from 1971 to 1973, scour the remains of the modernist grid. Read in dialogue with nearby knit works, the penciled parallels and perpendiculars of *Untitled*, 1972, figure modernism's emblem as a decorative pattern. Punctured by slight slashes of thread, the canvas rehearses its status as a woven surface whose formal logics strangely parallel those of knitting, defined, as both are, by a winnowing of gesture to a narrow menu of maneuvers. Reichek's hand-drawn lines, straight-edged and hemmed by the grid's coordinates, shuttle between the expressive and the mechanical, their ambivalence recalling Agnes Martin's forays in graphite and gesso.

Reichek's later works elaborate such concerns with iteration and facture. The triptych, *Bikini*, 1982, finds its titular garment stitched in metallic yarn and mounted on a black ground. In the adjoining frame, a two-dimensional scheme of the bathing suit spreads across graph paper. Each cell is matched, by way of color, to an operation in typeset font—"cast on," "purl," "bind off," "increase," and so forth—that parrots Richard Serra's *Verb List*, 1967, in the vernacular of "women's work." A gelatin silver print of the artist's torso, clad in an identical though chromatically inverted bikini, fills the final frame. Soft and speckled, Reichek's flesh raises questions of touch implicit in both the woven object and the analog photograph, with its claim to directly impress reality. Such translations among object, text, and photograph are standard Conceptual moves; one thinks of Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*, 1965. Yet if Kosuth's idiom, like that of modernism and its grid, is implicitly male, Reichek genders these premises, revealing the absences that enable its hermeticism.



Elaine Reichek, *Laura's Bikini*, 1979, colored pencil on graph paper, knitted cotton yarn mounted to paper, 46 1/2 x 58 3/4".

— Courtney Fiske