

# ARTFORUM

## Eleanore Mikus

CRAIG F. STARR GALLERY  
5 East 73rd Street  
February 3–March 25

Eleanore Mikus made the majority of her *Tablets* atop her studio floor, fitting sections of plywood into an eccentric patchwork then setting the arrangement with wooden braces and glue. The pressure subtly reconfigured each piece, yielding an improvised pattern of dents and grooves. Ripping the structure from the floor and reversing it, she applied repeated coats of gesso and white oil to its surface, marshaling paint as a form of adhesive to bind disparate elements. The result evolved into a series that Mikus started in 1961 and pursued until 1968, lingering on each piece for weeks or even years. Their deliberate facture parallels the perceptual mood they conjure: dulled and rapt, like staring at waves. Plays of light and shade color their surfaces with hints of pollen, peach, and plummy gray, leavening the monochrome's sameness with difference. The effect is amplified by Mikus's varying use of oil, acrylic, enamel, and epoxy paint, which lends each *Tablet* a specific, subtle luminosity.



Eleanore Mikus, *Tablet 142*, 1965–66, acrylic on wood, 34 x 52".

When describing the series, Mikus speaks of objects worn through contact: pavement, driftwood, shoe heels, and subway turnstiles. Often refined with sandpaper or wax, each seems less painted than caressed. Consider *Tablet 142*, 1965–66: four identically sized panels overlain with strips of thin wood. Pocked and puckered, the strips abut and overlap one another, producing ridges whose shadows look like drawn lines. The texture recalls the theatrical drapery of certain Baroque paintings, wherein folds prompt virtuosic demonstrations of chiaroscuro. The inclusion of *Untitled*, 1967, a board swathed in dark rose-colored cloth and bound with rubber bands, corroborates the comparison. Swelling surface into volume, its pleats are mnemonics: memories of contours modeled by hand. Thus contextualized, the *Tablets* disclose the doubled temporality inherent in their namesake: both an ephemeral pad for scribbles and an enduring monument, primed to relay a mystical message.

— Courtney Fiske

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