

MARC SELWYN FINE ART

ELEANORE MIKUS
April 7 – May 19, 2018



Marc Selwyn Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition of reliefs, paperfolds and paintings by Eleanore Mikus (1927 – 2017), a seminal but until now lesser known figure in the history of minimalist and monochromatic painting. Mikus arrived in New York in 1960, and in 1961 painted the first of her “Tablets” – the name she gave to a series of black, white and gray works that merge painting and bas-relief. In 1961, two Tablets were exhibited at the Whitney Museum where Ad Reinhardt saw the work. He was so impressed that he insisted on meeting her, and the two became friends. From 1962 to 1965, Mikus showed with The Pace Gallery and her works were acquired by major collections and institutions. Museum of Modern Art curator, Dorothy Miller, purchased a Tablet for the museum in 1964 and exhibited it in 1966.

At first glance, Mikus’s folded paper pieces and painted reliefs, with their modular grids and monochromatic aesthetic, seem to conform to the minimalist trends of the time. They diverge significantly, however, in their emphasis on natural materials and their handmade, somewhat happenstance qualities. Rejecting a more purely mathematical geometry, Mikus connected more with life’s inconsistent dynamics, the idea of continuous change, and the cycles of nature. Mikus sought beauty through a balance between both erosion and endurance, employing a process-based practice in which her materials were worked and reworked extensively over time. Her meditative paperfolds exemplify this pursuit as methodical, repeated creases form the basis of their complex gridded compositions.

As critic Robert Hobbs wrote, “Mikus’s Tablets, with their numinous surfaces of gently uneven planes beneath numerous coats of white paint (and at times, wax), embody the passage of time. Yet these softly nuanced components also reinforce the here and now, as well as incorporate an understated fragility, made more so by flickering surfaces created through these works’ ability to reflect light and generate shadows, and, as tablets, they also summon up the image of perseverance against time’s inevitable onslaughts.”

M A R C S E L W Y N F I N E A R T

In 2006-2007, Luis Camnitzer curated the acclaimed retrospective of Mikus's work *From Shell to Skin* at The Drawing Center, New York. Mikus's work can be found in important international museums including: the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Coco Gallery, Kyoto, Japan; The Gallery, Kyoto, Japan; Tatsaya Tanami, the International House of Japan, Tokyo, Japan; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.

The artist lived and worked in Ithaca, New York and recently passed away at age 90 in September 2017.