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ART IN REVIEW

Elaine Reichek: 'A Précis 1972-1995'



Christopher Burke/Zach Feuer Gallery, New York

Elaine Reichek's "The Artist's Bedroom," an intimate installation lined with images.

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Zach Feuer Gallery

548 West 22nd Street, Chelsea

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Elaine Reichek is well known for her needleworks, which put a feminist and multicultural spin on the embroidered samplers made by 18th- and 19th-century women. But painting and photo-appropriation played a crucial role in her art from the beginning, to judge by this elegant survey at [Zach Feuer](#).

It includes faint little grids from the early 1970s, which look like Agnes Martins but reveal themselves to be stitched or taped rather than penciled. Slightly later works from around 1980 juxtapose knitted bikinis and mittens with the patterns and diagrams used to make them, emphasizing that so-called "women's work" can be as coded, mathematical and rational as, say, a drawing by Sol LeWitt.

From around 1990 come knitted works with different kinds of source images: generally, ethnographic and typological photographs of people and architecture. "Painted Blackfoot," for instance, pairs an overpainted photograph of a tepee with a sacklike version in wool yarn. These works seem to argue that "crafts" like knitting come with the same historical baggage as mediums like painting or sculpture: They're as loaded and perverse, in other words, as Mike Kelley's soft sculptures.

Reinforcing that comparison is a closet-size installation in the back gallery, "The Artist's Bedroom." (A more elaborate bedroom installation from 1993, "[A Postcolonial Kinderhood Revisited](#)," was recently shown at the Jewish Museum.) This cozy, blue-walled chamber is lined with small framed assemblages that imagine famous 20th-century artworks as doll-size sheets and pillows, and although it sounds cute, it's actually sort of creepy and claustrophobic. It seems to ask whether there is such a thing as being too intimate with art.