

Isabella Ducrot
Remembering flowers

8 Bury Street London SW1Y
28 June – 17 August 2024
Private View: Friday 28 June, 6-8pm

Isabella talks in the way she writes: with erudition, originality and modesty, in asides and anecdotes. Every object in her apartment has a story. Both on the page and in person, she's full of curiosity, determined to get to the heart of a situation. I ask her what drives her writing. She replied: 'I always insist on saying something that is very true'.

– Jennifer Higgie

At Isabella Ducrot's second solo exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ, the artist demonstrates her unwavering ability to be continually inventive while delving into familiar motifs, providing an intimate insight into her artmaking practice. *Remembering flowers* echoes Ducrot's lived environment, where floral arrangements, figurative paintings, found textiles, collected ceramics, books and artworks of Ducrot's own creation collide. As both an artist and writer, Ducrot boldly defies pre-established genres, freely combining visual signifiers with untethered excerpts of raw and translated language to craft an exhibition that resonates with the cadence of linguistic expression.



In this ambitious new body of work on textile, each titled *Surprise*, Ducrot experiments with known motifs in a complex layering of sewn, sketched and painted materials with block printed paper. Central to Ducrot's practice is the pursuit of truth, extracts of written words are treated as precious fragments of fabric and stitched together to weave a narrative. Each unique composition reveals inner life with a decorative border – a window or door to an interior world – employed as an arched framing device reminiscent of Persian tapestries. Handwritten elements pay homage to Ducrot's late husband, whose philosophical ruminations detail their collection of Indian miniatures. Diary entries are scanned, printed and centred, other clippings become textured vases and Ducrot's own exclamations are enlarged to be utilised as signifiers, interrupting the scenes of domesticity. Text and fabric, as vehicles for meaning in their own right, are combined, exemplifying how Ducrot fearlessly imbues her art with sentiment.

Elsewhere in her ongoing *Pots* series, Ducrot positions the vase of flowers as her protagonist with newfound vigour in an unrestrained and animated style that drifts from her earlier tender and refined approach. These mixed media collages now consume their environment, exuberantly extending to the perimeters of their frame, expansive and full, in bloom, as if each is an individual printed textile. Nimble sketched floral outlines are filled with cutouts and pigments of blues and fluorescent yellows, furthering their development from the quieter hues of their solitary predecessors. Yet familiar elements are retained, the quadrangles of checkered cloth emerge from the bottom of the textile 'page', offsetting the welcomed explosion of colour, detail and textural layers above. Ducrot cites the initial inspiration behind her enduring fascination with the grid pattern as Simone Martini's *The Annunciation with St. Margaret and St. Ansanus* (1333) as she resonates with how 'The perpendicular lines and right-angles interfere with the sinuousness of the curved lines that dominate the painting, creating a clash, a challenge to the formal balance of the whole.'

This challenge of the formal balance extends to Ducrot's own inclusion of the simple cloth in her energetic still life imaginings, and further into the wider themes of *Remembering flowers*. The artist relentlessly reinvents and evolves her artmaking, inviting those familiar with her work to continually question and rediscover, to look again for new meaning.

Isabella Ducrot (b. 1931, Naples, Italy) has exhibited internationally since the mid-1980s, including at the Venice Biennales of 1993 and 2011. Recent solo exhibitions include *Profusione*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2024); *La Bella Terra*, MAXXI, Palazzo Ciampoli, Taormina (2023); *other things*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2023); and *La Bella Terra*, Villa San Michele, Capri (2023). Her work has been included in numerous recent group shows, including *Women artists. Paths in graphics from the twentieth century to today*, Central Institute for Graphics, Rome (2023); *Super Super Markt*, Berlin (2023); *The Drawing Centre Show*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2022); *Art and Nature*, Museo Carlo Bilotti Aranciera di Villa Borghese, Rome (2021); *Painting Stone*, Fondazione Dino ed Ernesta Santarelli, Villa Lontana, Rome (2021); *Io dico Io – I say I*, Galleria Nazionale, Rome (2021); and *Silent Transformations*, BID21ART Biennale, Internazionale Donna, Trieste (2021). She is the author of numerous philosophical and art-historical essays, including the books *Twenty-Two Places of the Soul* (2022), *Women's Life* (2021) and *The Checkered Cloth* (2019) all published by Quodlibet. In January 2023, the publishing house released a new catalogue, entitled *Isabella Ducrot: Stoffe* (Isabella Ducrot: Fabrics), an in-depth anthology of the artist's exquisite collection of rare fabrics amassed over the course of her lifetime; presenting two hundred and fifty-two fabrics that originate from across four continents. Ducrot lives and works in Rome.

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