

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

ISABELLA DUCROT

La bella terra

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'Some obsession seems to be evident at the origin of these works. Some kind of obsessive attitude could be the reasonable cause for having produced these five groups of works: although they are very different from each other; nonetheless each one persists in presenting the same things, repeated many times. In the series *La bella terra*, for instance, rivers, sky, stars, moon and trees are used again and again in order to compose many laudative songs for the earth's fundamental virtues and the urge to protect them. The group called *Repetition* presents old kitchen cloths decorated with repeating circles, a form of invocation like mantras or prayers. The series *Dresses* is extremely similar. The erotic images are all black-and-white and the pots are reduced to simplicity.

All these objects are made of pliable materials: no iron, wood, glass or ceramics. Papers and textiles have been used because of their adaptability and willingness to be transformed into something else, in another thing.'
(Isabella Ducrot)

Isabella Ducrot was born in Naples in 1931 and has lived in Rome for many years. In her extensive travels from Russia to the Far East, she developed a particular interest in fabrics from Eastern Europe and began studying the many differences in the textile traditions of China, India, Turkey and Central Asia. Over the years, she has amassed a collection of rare fabrics of historical interest, and felt an urgent need to transform them into objects.

What interests Ducrot in the fabric is how its texture symbolises the structure of the mind and of society. She is not so much drawn to embroidered pieces or shawls as towards the simplicity of fabrics that are absolutely raw and bare, without any kind of ornamentation. All their value and rarity have to do with the elementary quality of woven pieces.

Isabella Ducrot's artistic approach is extremely sensitive; the initial moment in the creation process of the works is tactile. Ducrot uses textiles and paper both as an artistic medium and as an artistic thread. The raw material, from which her fascination originally emanates, and its characteristics determine the motif for which it becomes an immanent carrier. The same applies to the technique with which the motif is created. Ducrot does not violate the colour of the textile or paper with her chromatic scheme; instead, she allows the material to become part of the images. In doing so, she drains the fabric of its historic content, its origins, to treat it like pure matter. She brings out the most hidden elements like structure and the relationship between colour and light.

The artist's chosen subjects are landscapes, circles, lovers, vases and teapots.

Nora Iosia elaborates on the still lifes on paper: 'These vases, teapots, and a handful of natural elements, in the rhythm of exercise, of repetition, take on a character that grows further and further away from the meaning of presence: the initial intention to stay within the confines of their formal essence founders nonetheless in a meditation that draws reality back to the essential in a single gesture, almost an ideogram of the present. (...) The objects chosen by Isabella Ducrot (...) belong to a scenic design of interiors; raised to the rank of protagonists, they pass from being present to a new presence, and reveal their beauty, because they have been stolen from memory, like eternal children: there is no yearning and no fear in this representation which definitively distances itself from the quotidian wear.'

Repetition is the subject and primary theme in many of Ducrot's artworks. In the East, repetitive elements are an end in itself, the centre of emotion. In the West, they are declared to be 'decoration', which is something always somewhat subordinate, framing an event or theme. In Ducrot's work, the repetitive element becomes the object of representation, the protagonist of the image. The rhythm of life, the heartbeat, is expressed by repetitive elements, which are, not coincidentally, also musical elements. This is a celebration of virtual infinity.

La bella terra repeats and therefore emphasises the beauty of life, the beauty of things, which seem to disappear: nature, love, but also the very simple and ordinary things that surround us, like a teapot or a piece of fabric, and their colours and shapes. In a very poetic and nevertheless playful way, Ducrot's work draws our attention to the beauty and significance of these subjects. Their existence is as fragile as the works themselves appear to be, but at the same time there is a sense of inherent energy, warmth and joy.