

ISABELLA DUCROT

*Tendernesses*

30 July - 5 September 2021

Galerie Gisela Capitain is delighted to announce its second solo show with Italian artist Isabella Ducrot (\*1931 in Naples). The exhibition *Tendernesses* features a new series of large scaled works on paper.

Observing these creatures intertwine with one another, confusingly feeling and groping, a few things become immediately clear: the characters seem Slavic, or at least from Eastern Europe, dressed in folk costumes, almost straight out of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. They hail from another time and another place, perhaps where clothes, in all their agile polychromic blends, characterized our lives in a different way. Are they inhabitants of a beautiful land?

Undoubtedly, their habitat is the night: not just the thin crescent moon in the sky but the fabrics recall nighttime, in some cases seemingly torn from the vault of the heavens (as if wearing fragments of what, figuratively, we sometimes refer to as the celestial mantle). As is Isabella's custom, the clothes are checked, starred, and polka-dotted, but not all the characters are dressed: naked figures stand out, some with vestigial wings. Are they human beings? Perhaps not; they may be demons, just like in Greek mythology Eros is a demon. Two figures of Eros seem to be represented: a sexual Eros, apparently in these winged creatures, similar to Eros or Lilith; and a more human Eros, freed from any demonic power, in which one is clothed, or half-naked. The demon is the natural instinct, sex, stripped down and raw, in all its imperious urgency; the human is the fabric, in which, as soon as the erotic instinct is fulfilled and disenchanting, Eros is revealed through a simple touching of the self. Always, however, we glimpse the body through the garments, as if this were a prehistoric carnal background in which the fetishistic joy of the fabric elbows its way in. [...]

Isabella seems attracted to everything that is normally hidden. Not self-important official mysteries, but precisely what is kept hidden out of modesty, out of embarrassment, all that is tacitly considered to be of little importance, unworthy and unseemly. In other words, Isabella is attracted not by what is expressly forbidden, by prohibitions, but by what we refer to as taboos: things, objects or gestures that we skirt around out of some kind of social and cultural pact. Yet precisely because of this, because they are not officially-formulated rules or legal prohibitions, they offer scope for an even more powerful force to act. In so-called primitive civilizations, taboo was a kind of electric charge, anointing certain not-yet-fully-defined objects, always capable of assuming purity or impurity, the sacred or the forbidden (the word sacer, in Hebrew *qadoš*, means both "sacred" and "impure"). One and the same gesture, the impossibility of being touched, indicated the observance of that which is sacred and that which is impure. Isabella is attracted by this space laden with opposing tensions. She does not proceed with the intention of desecrating, but with an instinctive desire for knowledge, spurred on by an inkling that, among the stained and greasy checked fabrics, something decisive lurks.

– Emanuele Dattilo

# GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

Isabella Ducrot has lived in Rome for many years. Only beginning her artistic career later in life, her 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. She allows the material to become part of the image and so drains the fabric of its historical content treating it as pure matter. This exposes the materials' hidden elements and its composition. Repetition is the subject and primary theme in many of her artworks. For Ducrot, this repetitive element becomes the object of representation.

Institutional exhibitions include: Museo Carlo Bilotti Aranciera di Villa Borghese, Rome; Biennale Internazionale Donna, Trieste; Fondazione Dino ed Ernesta Santarelli, Rome (2021); Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna et Contemporanea, Rome (2016); Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples; Nazionale Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome (2015); Museo Michetta, Francavilla al Mare (2010); City University of New York, New York (2008); Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, 21st Biennale, Ljubljana (1995); Palazzo del Popolo, Orvieto (1994).

Isabella Ducrot was invited to exhibit at the Italian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2011 and 1993.