

PRESS RELEASE

**Isabella Ducrot : *Soft Focus***  
@The Showroom by Xavier Fischer  
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Isabella Ducrot's artistic trajectory follows a singular timeline, characterized by a late maturation that defies the standard chronology expected of contemporary artists. Born in Naples in 1931, her sensibility was defined by the city's notorious fluidity—where boundaries between domestic and street life, sacred vs. profane, the present and the ancestral are colorfully porous. This early exposure to a reality where distinct categories bleed into one another established the foundation for her later inquiries.

Her worldview was further expanded by decades of travel, among which extensive sojourns in Asia, traversing landscapes from Turkey to Tibet with a returning fondness for India, in particular. These journeys were not merely geographic but spiritual, instilling in her a deep appreciation for the ritualistic weight of objects and the rhythmic continuity of daily life. Ducrot's practice synthesizes these experiences. Her drawings, paintings and textiles operate within a cyclical conception of time, where memory is not a static archive but an active material to be reworked and reimagined. This exhibition is a first and exciting opportunity to look at an, essentially, never before seen body of photographic works.

One of the most original aspects of Ducrot's work is in her soft but powerful focus. A different way of looking that is particularly relevant in her subversion of flowers and plant motifs. In the canon of so-called Western art history, still life was frequently deployed as a meditation on mortality (*Natura morta*) meant to capture beauty, its splendor and vanity, in the melancholic moment before decay. This approach remained largely consistent with the advent of photography. Ducrot rejects this passive association. In her drawings and paintings, her representations of flowers and plants are not polite decorative arrangements but formidable assertions of existence. Their reproductive nature is highlighted, with a focus on the biological structures that drive blooming and renewal rather than more conventionally regarded aesthetical qualities. In her photographs, that outward/upward drive leaves way for a calm, introspective look that seems to encapsulate the flowers' energy as if in a crystal or glass bead.

Her photos highlight how the revitalization of the natural subject also necessitates (and emanates from) a reimagining of the domestic space it inhabits. Ducrot challenges the interpretation of the home as a site of confinement or limitation. Instead, she posits the domestic interior as a theater of profound subjectivity and power. In this selection of photographic editions (brought to public attention for the first time in collaboration with s.t. senza titolo, Rome) the artist experimented with an unprecedented degree of immediacy in the creation of her still lifes.

The act of tending to these ephemeral, fragile, precariously alive compositions, arranging them and absorbing their essence on film is elevated to a ritual. The photographic prints, derived from positive scans of irreplaceable items in the artist's archive, are consistent with the repetition of the flower and vase motif across her various bodies of work. Their characteristically diminutive scale is a departure from the artist's frequent use of size and color to define her images' scope and conceptual strengths. As in her drawings, paintings and collages, the vessels are also important: they never imprison the flower/s, they anchor their upward thrust. The photos, taken by the artists over several years, probably between the late 80s and late 90s, function like a visual mantra, sanctifying the private sphere. For this exhibition, we also wanted to include a few portraits of friends (including a striking image of poet Patrizia Cavalli) to situate the still lives in the context of Ducrot's home and studio and its colorful daily life. In her viewfinder, these flower arrangements and her fellow travelers are characters in a temple where nature is intimately encountered, revered, shared and enjoyed.

Isabella Ducrot's photos contribute to her quiet but fierce dismantling of the hierarchies that separate the high arts from the domestic arts. Their soft focus transforms the decorative, decaying *Natura Morta* into a desktop-size firework of radical vitality, reclaiming the domestic sphere as a place of outward energy. They suggest that the interior is not a retreat from the world, but the very center of it—a space that, thanks to paper, cloth, and now photographic print, the fragility and the ferocity of life coexist in a permanent, vibrant tension, regardless of scale and magnitude.

Marco Antonini

Isabella Ducrot (b. 1931, Naples; lives and works in Rome) is an Italian artist and writer known for works on paper incorporating textile references, repetition and pattern. Her work is in major international collections and was part of the Venice Biennale in 1993 and 2011. In recent years she had major exhibitions including "Weaving is Human" at Museo delle Civiltà, Rome (2024–25), "Profusions" at Sadie Coles HQ, London (2025) and "Altri Fiori" at Capitain Petzel, Berlin (2025). In 2024, her installation "Omaggio a Mishima" was presented in Art Basel Unlimited (2022). A major retrospective is forthcoming at the MADRE Museum, Naples (2026).

Marco Antonini is a Zurich-based curator and artist. Between 2018 and 2025 he worked in the UBS Art Partnerships and Art Advisory teams. From 2011 to 2016 he was Director of NURTUREart, in Brooklyn NY, a not-for-profit organization and gallery dedicated to emerging positions. His curatorial projects have been presented by Japan Society, LMCC, ISCP, Abrons Art Center, Elizabeth Foundation in New York and internationally at Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation (Venice), FUTURA (Prague), CCEG (Guatemala City) - among many others. His writing on visual art has been published extensively and internationally.