

Glafira May, "Isabella Ducrot: The Surface as Truth at Petzel Gallery," *Fine Art Globe*, July 16, 2025.



Isabella Ducrot: The Surface as Truth at Petzel Gallery

In "Profusions" and "Visited Lands," Ducrot reveals the fragile honesty of flowers, fabrics, and appearances

By [Glafira May](#)

July 16, 2025



Isabella Ducrot, "The Visited Land I," 2025. Pigments, meteorite pigment, and collage on Japan paper. 96in x 155.5 in (243.8 x 395 cm). (Courtesy: Petzel Gallery).

Isabella Ducrot is a visual artist and writer who was born in Naples in 1931. Both her writing and her collage-based paintings explore themes of unraveling and posturing, our instinct to remain poised, and our desires to at once shed all composure. Her work resists solemnity; it is expressive, joyful, and unconstrained.

In writing about the myth of Penelope, Ducrot reflects, "By unweaving that which she has woven, Penelope was using fabric as if it were a clock whose arms she could move back at will...However, trying to unweave a piece of fabric is almost as hopeless as trying to arrest time." As Penelope devotedly awaited Odysseus' return home, she promised to choose a

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new husband once she finished weaving her father's burial shroud. In an attempt to outwit all of her suitors, Penelope would weave during the day and at night secretly unweave, unravel her progress, in hopes of delaying this decision.

Isabella Ducrot is currently exhibiting her second solo show, which includes her "Profusion" series of flowers in vases, and debuting her new series titled "Visited Lands" at [Petzel Gallery](#) from June 5th to July 18th.



Isabella Ducrot, "Profusion XVI, 2025." Pigments, ink, and collage on Japan paper. 54.5in x 43.75in (138.4 x 111.1 cm). (Courtesy: Petzel Gallery)

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From Mary Cassatt's "Lilacs in a Window," to Van Gogh's "Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers," to Ambrosias Bosschaert's "Vase of Flowers in a Window Niche," for centuries portraits of flowers in vases have asked us to appreciate the fleeting beauty of a once wild flower deracinated and contained into a poised bouquet set out on a dining table. Ducrot's "Profusions" questions this tranquil beauty, as these flowers spiral outside of the vase, cascading into the background and rebelling against being the point of attraction on a windowsill.

Moving past these evocations of a well-tended home in "Profusions," we enter the newly debuted "Visited Lands," where we feel far from home; the uprooted trees appear to gallop out of their roots into the night. While the moon and waters have their assigned corners of the piece, everything appears untethered. We watch flowers unravel into foreign lands straight out of where the wild things are. We feel the stillness and the lack of breeze inside a home with her "Profusions" series, and then a gust of wind moves the visited lands, propelling all things forward towards the ocean in her "Visited Lands". A harkening back to the Ocean, where we came from.



Installation view, Isabella Ducrot, Visited Lands, 2025, Petzel. (Courtesy: Petzel Gallery).

The two series act as evolutionary transmutations of each other, with the truth of the domestic veneer and the wild chaos bubbling beneath, and they are both honest in their beauty. Using meteriote pigments, ink, and collage on Gampi paper, Ducrot's work invites us to reconsider the surface as a site of truth, suggesting that beauty, repetition, and fragility are not distractions from reality but expressions of it, especially in a world conditioned to seek meaning only in what lies beneath.

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We assume age brings wisdom, that truth accumulates like tree rings, yet there is as much truth in a jubilant 10-year-old as in a disillusioned elder, only a different kind. Ducrot invites us to find meaning in surfaces: in materials, in stillness, in appearances.



Isabella Ducrot, *Profusion with Violet Pot* 2024. Pigments, ink, and collage on paper. 30.5in x 24.25in (77.5 x 61.6 cm). (Courtesy: Petzel Gallery).

"The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs 'behind' the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one," writes Susan Sontag in her essay *Against Interpretation*. Ducrot's work reflects this unnecessary desire to dig to find anything worthwhile and honest.

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Small talk, poised appearances, and cut flowers in vases on the kitchen counter are honest in that they show who we are trying to be, what we are trying to achieve. So-called “Deep conversations”, drunken stumbles, and wild flowers appear more honest in that they show exactly what we are, but both provide a necessary truth.

Ducrot’s work feels like listening to a friend tell a story you know isn’t true and ultimately finding yourself not caring. The story holds something deeper. She paints fabrics, flower displays, lovers — not to expose what’s hidden, but to evoke tenderness, presence, and the possibility of touch. Ducrot paints the outsides of things, the tops and outermost layers of things. Not the depths, but the edges. The surface.

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