

See the 93-Year-Old Textile Artist Isabella Ducrot's Monumental Scenography for Dior Couture

news.artnet.com/art-world/dior-couture-isabella-ducrot-2422482

The Italian artist created 23 large textile works in collaboration with Dior designer Maria Grazia Chiuri.

Lee Carter, January 23, 2024



Models in designer Maria Grazia Chiuri's spring 2024 couture show with works by Isabella Ducrot in the background.
Photo: Laura Sciacovelli. Courtesy of Dior.

Upon entering the Musée Rodin in Paris, guests of Dior's spring 2024 haute couture show—who included the glittery likes of *The Crown*'s Elizabeth Debicki, Rihanna, Natalie Portman, Indian actress Sonam Kapoor, and South African opera singer Pretty Yende—found themselves swathed in the theme of the show: the sensual tactility of fabric.

Blanketing the walls of the space were 23 monumental works by the nonagenarian Italian textile artist Isabella Ducrot. Indeed, these enormous depictions of garments—each measuring five meters in height—were woven on ancestral looms by the artisans of the Chanakya ateliers and School of Craft in Mumbai, India.



Dior spring 2024 couture. Photo: Adrien Dirand. Courtesy of Dior.

Ducrot distorted the proportionality of these new textiles, in much the same way Christian Dior's lauded dresses of the 1950s were ingeniously sculpted to offer a new postwar outlook—and posture. Dior designer Maria Grazia Chiuri mined these exaggerated house codes for the new couture collection, too. She brought back, for instance, the Cigale dress of 1952, with its elegant layers and tulip-like cut-outs. She reimagined the 1951 Mexique dress with clean lines, and reinterpreted the classic twill trench coat in a host of contemporary forms and proportions. Chiuri also modernized the iconic Bar suit, pairing it with wide-legged trousers.

Throughout, she employed moiré and velvet in shimmery shades of gold, burgundy, green, and the maison's trademark dove-gray, ending the show with an off-the-shoulder polka dot look.



Two panels of Isabella Ducrot's set design for Dior couture. Courtesy of Dior.

The Parisian couture house isn't the only platform where Ducrot's works have been seen of late. Her exhibition "Il Miracoloso" ran at the Roman gallery T293 in March 2023, and last summer, another solo show went on view at Galerie Gisela Capitain's new temporary space in Naples. Last year also saw her first solo show in Britain, at London's Sadie Coles HQ. And now, for Ducrot's New York City debut, the Upper East Side gallery Petzel has assembled her works on paper—another kind of fiber—in the exhibition "No Words," which the gallery calls a meditation on materiality.

It seems that Ducrot has always been swathed in fabric, having spent her life and career working with all manner of the material, whether ancient or contemporary. Early on, the artist produced a series of 12 paintings composed of fragments from a 1000-year-old Andean textile. She then spent two years composing Ottoman-inspired tapestries, and at the 1993 Venice Biennale, she exhibited a large tapestry that is now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) in Sicily.



Close-up view. Courtesy of Dior.

As Ducrot said in 2002 when addressing the Women's History department at the Institute of Philosophical Studies in Naples, "My creative work goes hand in hand with the search for new fabric uses. Its aesthetic qualities continue to inspire me, as does its historical importance within human civilization. I have dedicated my work to textiles."



Lee Carter

Collectors Guide Editor