



Alighiero Boetti, *Mappa*, 1989-94

Giorgio Cini Foundation  
Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice  
12 May – 12 July 2017

Press Day: 9 May 2017, 10am – 7pm. Curator-led tours at 4pm and 5pm

Exhibition hours during the Vernissage of the Venice Biennale:  
9 – 13 May, 10am – 7pm. On 10 May the exhibition closes at 6pm

## *Alighiero Boetti: Minimum/Maximum*

Curated by Luca Massimo Barbero  
with a special project by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Agata Boetti

*The exhibition celebrates the genius of the Italian artist with over 20 spectacular works, selected for the very first time according to their size in order to compare the “minimum” and “maximum” examples of Boetti’s most significant series of works. This new way of looking at Boetti’s work provides fresh insight into the artist’s creative process.*

*Curated by Luca Massimo Barbero with the Alighiero Boetti Archive, the exhibition also presents a special project developed by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Agata Boetti around Boetti’s work on*



*photocopies, entitled COLOUR = REALITY. B+W = ABSTRACTION (except zebras).*

Twenty-two years after the posthumous homage to Boetti curated by Germano Celant at the 2001 Venice Biennale, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini hosts an unprecedented journey through the work of **Alighiero Boetti** (1940-94), one of Italy's most prominent and influential artists. *Alighiero Boetti: Minimum/Maximum*, curated by **Luca Massimo Barbero**, director of the Istituto di Storia dell'Arte della Fondazione Giorgio Cini, with the collaboration of the **Archivio Alighiero Boetti**, presents an original juxtaposition between the **minimum and maximum formats of the artist's most iconic cycles of works** in order to explore Boetti's artistic process and iconography. From one to many, micro to macro, and private to public, 'Minimum/Maximum' explores the Boetti's dialectical approach to art and examines the radically conceptual role of an artist who liked to define himself as a 'creator of rules'.

'This exhibition is not a retrospective but rather presents visitors with an unprecedented series of comparisons, inspired by the gathering of large-scale works by Boetti from public and private collections,' explains **Luca Massimo Barbero**. 'It is an organic project that was specially conceived for Venice at a time in which the role of Boetti as one of the major exponents of Italian art is being increasingly recognised internationally.'

The exhibition is organised by the **Fondazione Giorgio Cini** in collaboration with **Tornabuoni Art** and the **Alighiero Boetti Archive**. Its highlights include major loans from important private and public collections. Among these are the monumental watercolour triptych *Aerei* (1989) from the Fondation Carmignac, *Mimetico* (camouflage) (1967) from the Fondazione Prada and *Lavoro Postale (permutazione)* (postal work (permutation)) (1972) from the Stedelijk Museum, as well as loans from the Boetti family.

Divided into **11 sections** with over 20 artworks, the exhibition contains Boetti's most iconic cycles of works – *Ricami* (embroideries), *Aerei* (planes), *Mappe* (maps), *Tutto* (everything) and *Biro* (works made with a ballpoint pen) – as well as some less famous works such as the *Bollini colorati* (coloured stickers), la *Storia Naturale della Moltiplicazione* (natural history of multiplication) and the *Copertine* (magazine covers). It is also an opportunity to show **works** that are largely **unknown to the greater public**, such as the large-scale work with coloured stickers *Estate 70* (1970) – on loan for this event from the artist's family – and *Titoli* (1978), one of the largest formats from the rare series of monochrome embroideries.

The **theme of the format** is crucial to understanding the way Boetti conceived and realised his works and is directly connected to the concept of time, as in *Estate 70*, a monumental work that opens the exhibition – a twenty-metre roll of paper, onto



which Boetti applied thousands of colourful stickers. This work is unique, not only in its scale, but also because it introduces in a powerful way how **the notion of time is an essential element of Boetti's work**. For him, the process and time that it takes to make the artwork is part of the beauty of the artwork. The smaller works complement the meaning of the larger works in a dialogue that is characteristic of Boetti's creative process.

The exhibition unfolds through focused comparisons between small and large, minimum and maximum, with works like *Storia Naturale della Moltiplicazione*, *Mettere al mondo il mondo* (to bring the world into the world) and *Alternando da uno a cento e viceversa* (alternating from one to one hundred and vice versa) – allowing the viewer to experience within a single space works from different phases of the artist's career.

The exhibition also includes a screening of *Niente da vedere Niente da nascondere* (nothing to see, nothing to hide), a documentary made by Emidio Greco in 1978 on the occasion of the Boetti retrospective at the Kunsthalle in Basel. The film alternates between images of the Swiss exhibition and scenes of Boetti's Roman studio and provides viewers with a way into the works on show through Boetti's own words.

The exhibition then continues with the famous *Mappe* (maps) and with the *Tutto* (everything) – 'a panoply of Boetti's themes and images' – explains Barbero – that introduces the seminal theme of the deferred realisation of the artwork, of travel and the nomadic aspect of art, in turn connected to the idea of time. This concept is most evident in the embroideries, which were begun by Boetti and his assistants in Rome, to then be sent to Kabul and later Peshawar in Pakistan following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. There, artisans from families of Afghan refugees embroidered them with colours of their own choosing according to the rules set by Boetti. The works were then returned to Rome, where the artist saw them completed for the first time. These and many other episodes in Boetti's career reveal his philosophy that he as an artist creates the rules of the game and invites others to play it, that the act of creation involves a dialectical tension between control and chance, between the conceptual and the physical.

The section of the exhibition dedicated to these juxtapositions ends with the monumental *Copertine* (magazine covers), a 1984 work that speaks of media obsession and of the transmission, reproduction and reuse of images, implicitly questioning the truth of media images. This work leads into the special project by **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, Artistic Director for the Serpentine Gallery in London, and **Agata Boetti**, daughter of the artist and Director of the Archivio Alighiero Boetti. The project is a further example of Boetti's essentially dialectical way of thinking as it revolves around the **theme of photocopies**.



‘Already in 1969 in Turin, I used to go to the Rank Xerox showroom with coins in my pocket and so many ideas. – said Boetti in 1991 – I used to say that the photocopier is not only a machine for the office – in the year 2000 everyone will have one in their living room! Give me one and I will document for you some of its creative applications. I didn't mean manipulating its mechanism or the ink like some have done from Munari onwards. No, I was interested in the standard application. But for example I would have put it on the balcony when it starts to rain, one drop, ten drops, a thousand drops...’

*COLOUR=REALITY. B+W=ABSTRACTION (except zebras)* explores Boetti's ‘creative applications’ by showing together for the first time a group of works made with a copy machine in various moments of the artist's career and which, according to Obrist, bear witness to Boetti's passion for communication technologies (like the polaroid or the use of fax – introduced in the 1980s – which is a synthesis of post and photocopy) and invite viewers to imagine the creative uses which Boetti would have found for our current means of communication and reproduction of images:

‘By showing these works in an installation, as we are doing with the 1665 photocopies at the Fondazione Cini, we will show the public that Boetti was like an analogue version of the Internet,’ says Obrist, whose encounters with Boetti as a student inspired his curatorial practice. ‘He was like a search engine. He anticipated Google with analogue means.’

At the centre of the room dedicated to photocopies, visitors will be invited to use a real photocopier by following rules specially created by Mexican artist **Mario Garcia Torres** as an homage to Alighiero Boetti.

*Alighiero Boetti: Minimum/Maximum* curated by Luca Massimo Barbero and the special project *COLOUR = REALITY. B+W = ABSTRACTION (except zebras)*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Agata Boetti, will each be accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, published by Forma Edizioni, Florence.

#### Exhibition information:

Title: *Alighiero Boetti: Minimum/Maximum* with the special project  
*COLOUR = REALITY. B+W = ABSTRACTION (except zebras)*  
Production: Fondazione Giorgio Cini onlus and Tornabuoni Art  
Curator: Luca Massimo Barbero, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Agata  
Boetti  
Dates: 12 May - 12 July 2017  
Opening Hours: 11 am – 7 pm, closed on Wednesdays  
Location: Venice, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore



Vaporetto: 'San Giorgio' stop on Line 2, departing from San Zaccaria  
Jolanda (about 3 minutes) and Zattere (about 10 minutes)  
Tickets: free entry  
Catalogues: Forma Edizioni, Florence  
Info: [info@cini.it](mailto:info@cini.it)  
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**Notes for Editors:**

**About Alighiero Boetti**

Alighiero Boetti – or Alighiero e Boetti as he liked to sign his works from 1971 – was born on 16 December 1940 in Turin, Italy. The son of lawyer Corrado Boetti and Adelina



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Marchisio, he began his career as a self-taught artist, after having briefly studied Business and Economics at the University of Turin.

In 1967, the Christian Stein gallery in Turin offered Boetti his first solo show, at a time when Arte Povera was emerging as an important movement. The young artist was subsequently invited to take part in all group exhibitions around this theme, that paved the way for total freedom of artistic expression, and for his participation in shows related to conceptual art, such as *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Basel in 1969.

This show marked Boetti's detachment from Arte Povera in favour of conceptual experimentation through duplication, symmetry and multiplication. His works then focused on codes of classification and communication, working with numbers, maps and alphabets, playing with a variety of materials and techniques, often reminiscent of ancient Middle-Eastern craftsmanship.

Boetti's passion for Afghanistan began in the early 1970s with a few trips that later turned into long stays. During this time Boetti began working on the *Mappe* (Maps), entrusting the realisation of his tapestries to Afghan women embroiderers. The colours and shapes of the flags changed according to the world's geopolitical context at the time of the realisation (1971-1994). Kabul inspired another famous series: the *Arazzi* (Embroideries). After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (December 1979 – February 1989), the discontinuation of the production of tapestries led him to work with Afghan refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan (from 1986).

A great traveller, Boetti spent long periods on different continents. Countries such as Ethiopia, Guatemala and Japan inspired him to create his *Lavori postali* (Postal works) with local stamps. Evoking the passing of time, these pieces were based on the mathematical mutation of the stamps and on the unpredictability of the world's postal services.

The revolutionary aspect of Boetti's work was to radically question the role of the artist and the impact of chance, sequence, language, repetition and authorship in the creation of a work of art. His work and attitude have strongly influenced the next generation of artists in Italy and around the world.

### About the Fondazione Giorgio Cini

The Fondazione Giorgio Cini is a non-profit cultural institution based in Venice, Italy. It was founded by Vittorio Cini, in memory of his son Giorgio, with the aim of restoring the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore (devastated after 100 years of military occupation) and of creating an international cultural centre that would re-integrate the Island into the life of Venice.

«The Fondazione Giorgio Cini's mission is to promote the redevelopment of the monumental complex on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore and encourage the creation



and development of educational, social, cultural and artistic institutions in its surrounding territory.»

Alongside the Foundation's commitment to its own research and the conferences and seminars growing out of this work, the Island welcomes events sponsored by distinguished cultural and scientific organizations. It has even been the site of major international summits (most importantly the G7 in 1980 and 1987).

The role of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini is attested by the many highly esteemed intellectuals, artists, politicians and economists who have been involved in its programme, and by the recollections of scholars and guests who have spent time on the Island.

### **About Tornabuoni Art**

Tornabuoni Art was founded by Roberto Casamonti in 1981 in Florence, in via Tornabuoni from which it takes its name. Several galleries were then opened in Switzerland in Crans Montana (1993), in Milan (2005), Paris (2009) and London (2015).

Tornabuoni Art specialises in Post-War Italian art, and in particular in the works of Lucio Fontana, Alberto Burri, Paolo Scheggi, Enrico Castellani and Alighiero Boetti. Close collaboration with the foundations that represent the artists or the authors of their general catalogues have enabled the gallery to publish scholarly catalogues in collaboration with Forma Edizioni, Florence, with monographs on Lucio Fontana, Enrico Castellani, Alighiero Boetti, Mimmo Rotella, Paolo Scheggi, Arnaldo Pomodoro, and Emilio Isgrò.

The founder of Tornabuoni Art met Boetti in the 1980s and immediately became one of his most passionate collectors. Since the artist's death, the gallery has been committed to promoting Boetti's work, specifically through exhibitions in public institutions and in its own exhibition spaces, such as the 2010 exhibition at Tornabuoni Art Paris, curated by Annemarie Sauzeau. Many works from this show were then included in the *Game Plan* exhibition, at London's Tate Modern, for which Tornabuoni was one of the main lenders. More recently, between late 2016 and spring 2017, the gallery organised two important retrospectives in its London and Paris galleries to mark the publication of a new *Alighiero Boetti* monograph, edited by Laura Cherubini, with a contribution by Agata Boetti, Director of the Archivio Alighiero Boetti.

Tornabuoni has collaborated with the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in the organisation and realisation of the exhibition *Alighiero e Boetti: Minimum/Maximum* at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, in addition to lending work.

