

BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

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01/16/04

## ALIGHIERO BOETTI

February 28 – March 27, 2004

Barbara Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Alighiero Boetti.

Over the course of his career, Alighiero Boetti gave increasing importance to the creative concept, the investigation of culture and society through the idea. Boetti was born in Turin in 1940 and by 1966 had become associated with a group of artists whose groundbreaking work Germano Celant would feature in his exhibition "Arte Povera" in 1967. Through the use of everyday materials, the Arte Povera aesthetic sought an immediate connection with real life. These artists shared an intense interest in destabilizing the dominant structures behind the "false" realities of consumer-capitalism. In keeping with his political philosophy, Boetti renamed himself Alighiero *e* Boetti to expose the underlying structure present in one's own identity as expressed in the dual nature of the self and the name. He said: "While a name is unique, a surname is already a category, a means of classification . . ." Bipolarities permeate Boetti's thought: part and whole; half and double; full and empty; order and disorder; addition and subtraction; *Alighiero and Boetti*. Boetti sought throughout his career to uncover the duality of structure.

This exhibition includes key works by Boetti that highlight the variety of media he employed and also disclose the consistency of his vision. Initially, Boetti's embroidered series of maps (*Mappa*) were conceptual works that called attention to global political crises and the growing tension between East and West. These embroidered tapestries were commissioned from weavers in Afghanistan and Pakistan between 1971 and 1994. Boetti would layout their designs – world maps, aphorisms, symbols – and the weavers would create the works. Over time the political message turned more historical and Boetti began to produce the maps in series, and thus began his transition from the unique work towards seriality. Numerical operations, also notably present throughout Boetti's oeuvre, can be seen in his fascination with numbers, progression and mathematics, which are thematized in *Opera Postale* (Postal Work). In this work, executed in 1980, Boetti created his own unique order system based on possible combinations of numbers. This culminated in eight groups of envelopes and their contents, which were all sent to the same address. The number of letters in each distinct group grows exponentially. An important *Copertina* from 1986 employs seriality and progression via traced magazine covers, one for each month of the year. The juxtaposition of the political and the popular news connect the viewer with contemporary events that uncannily repeat themselves. *Mappa*, *Copertina* and *Opera Postale* reveal Boetti's political concerns and his belief in the contingency of both history and the individual viewer. In these works, as throughout Boetti's oeuvre, the viewer is an essential part in the completion of the work. For Boetti, "...once the basic idea has emerged, the concept, the rest is not a matter of choice..."

Alighiero Boetti's solo exhibitions include: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; The Venice Biennale; Kunstverein Münster; Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; DIA Center for the Arts, New York; The Institute for Contemporary Art P.S.1 Museum, New York; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin; Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. Alighiero *e* Boetti died in 1994. A catalogue, published by Charta, with an essay by Rolf Lauter will accompany the exhibition.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm For further information please contact Tina Samii  
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