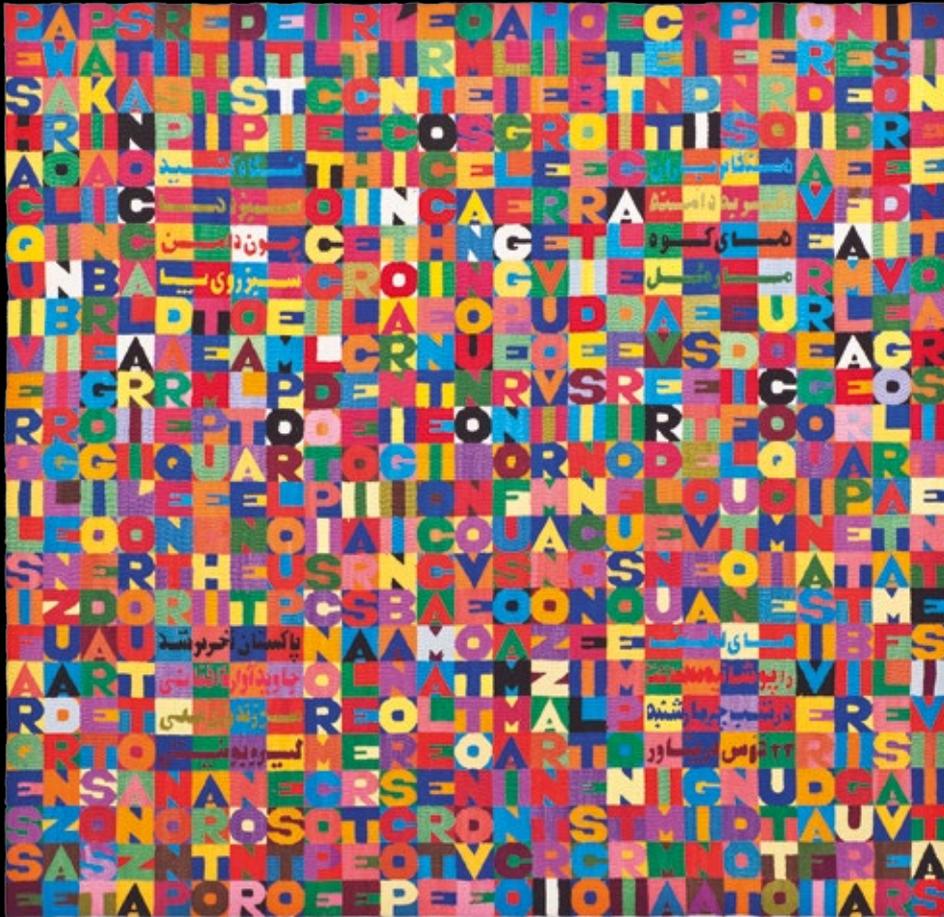


Eva Menzio
&
Fabrizio Moretti



Alighiero Boetti



Alighiero Boetti

Oggi quarto giorno del quarto mese anno uno nove otto nove
1989

Embroidery on cotton
110 x 110 cm



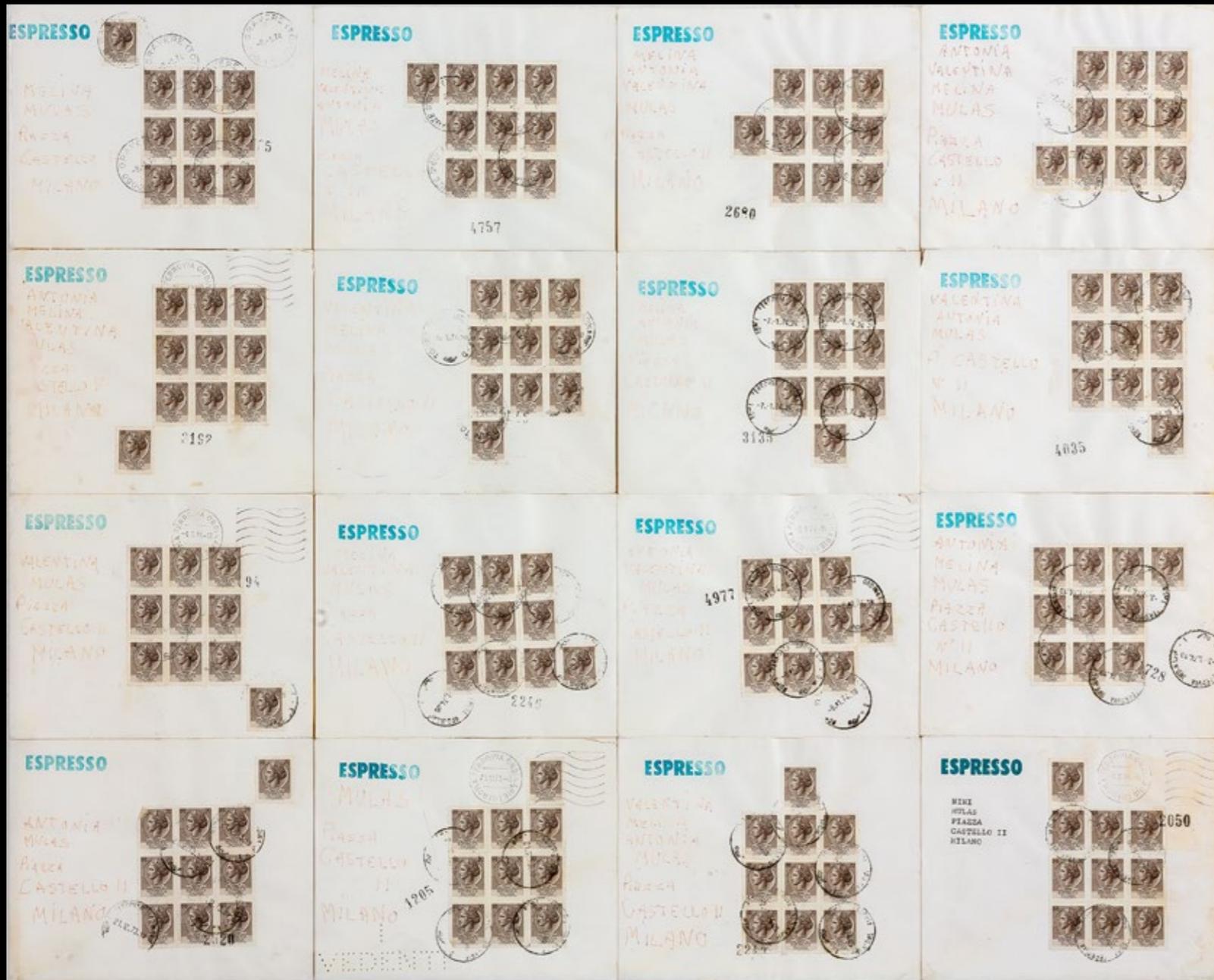
Alighiero Boetti
Sandro Penna:
io vivere vorrei addormentato entro il dolce rumore della vita
1977

Embroidery on linen canvas
58 x 62 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Una parola al vento...
1989

Embroidery on fabric,
82,7 x 26 cm
Signed on back



Alighiero Boetti
Lavoro postale (Per Nini, Melina, Valentina Mulas)
1973-74

Stamped envelopes including dry I SEE stamp, ink and pencil
49 x 62 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Svelare e rivelare
1992

Gray monochrome embroidery
22 x 23 cm



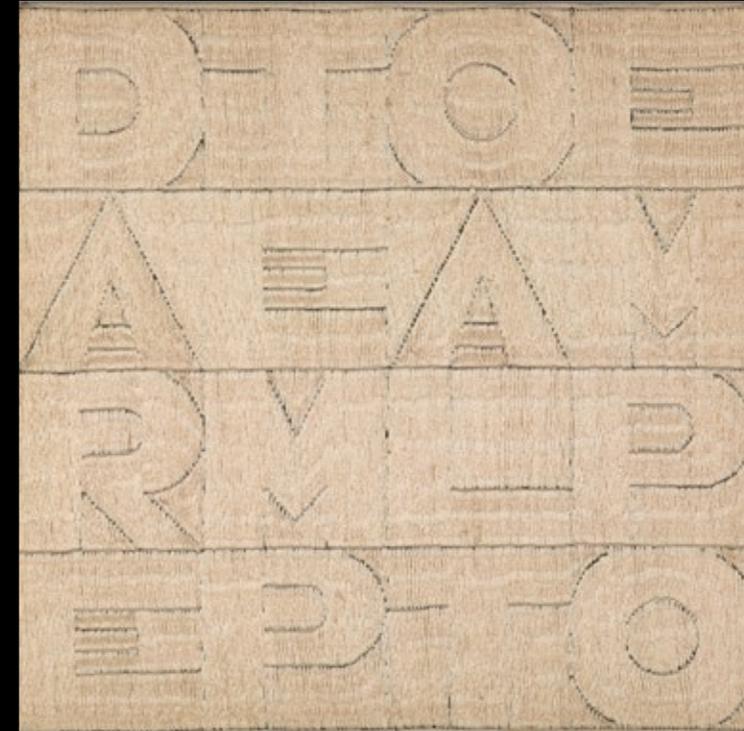
Alighiero Boetti
Segno e disegno
1977

Embroidery on canvas mounted on board
29.5 x 29.5cm
signed, inscribed and dated "alighiero e boetti Kabul 77"
(on the reverse)



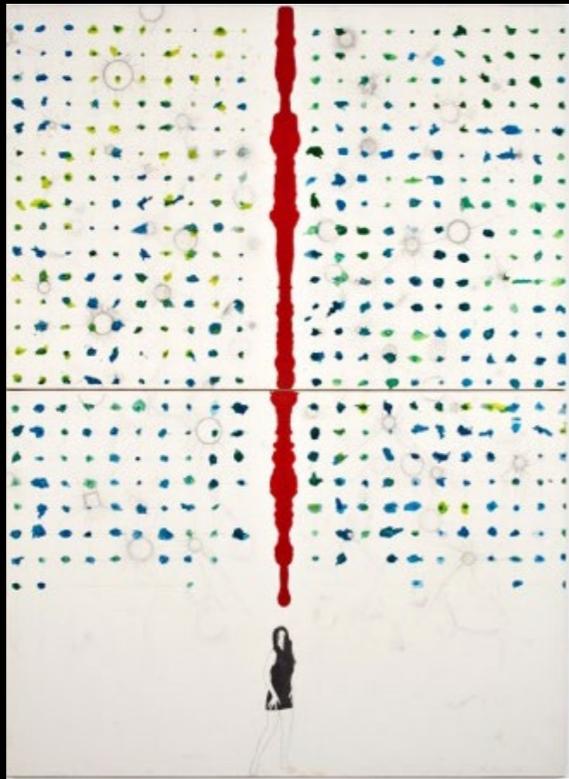
Alighiero Boetti
Mimetico (Camouflage)
1967

Camouflage fabric
45 x 45 cm
signed 'alighiero e boetti' (on the overlap)



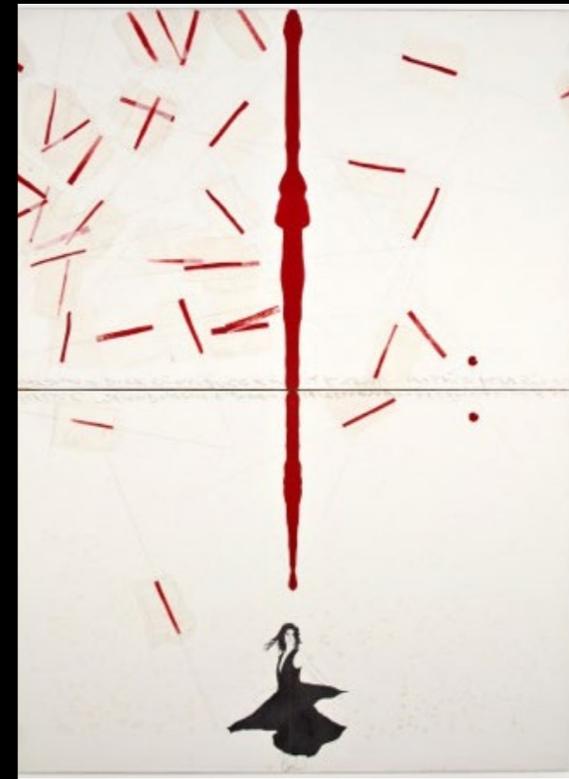
Alighiero Boetti
Dare tempo al tempo
1979

Monochrome Embroidery
24 x 24.5 cm



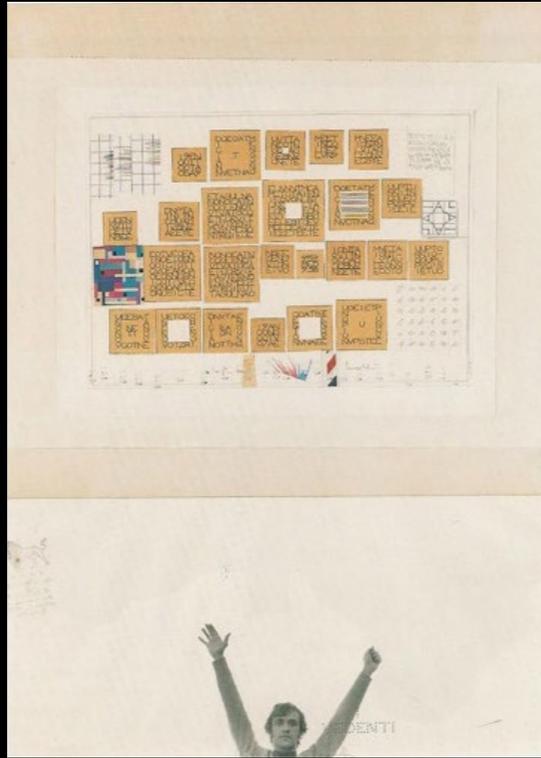
Alighiero Boetti
Donnina
1990

Mixed media on canvas-backed paper
200 x 150 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Donnina
1990

Mixed media on canvas-backed paper
200 x 150 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Senza titolo
1979

Ink, pencil, collage, stamp and photocopies on paper
69 x 50 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Lavoro postale
1990

Envelopes with stamps and drawing on paper
43,5x37 cm
28x21 cm (6 artworks)



Alighiero Boetti
Senza titolo (Il rinoceronte quasi estinto...)
1991

Mixed media on canvas-backed paper
70 x 50 cm



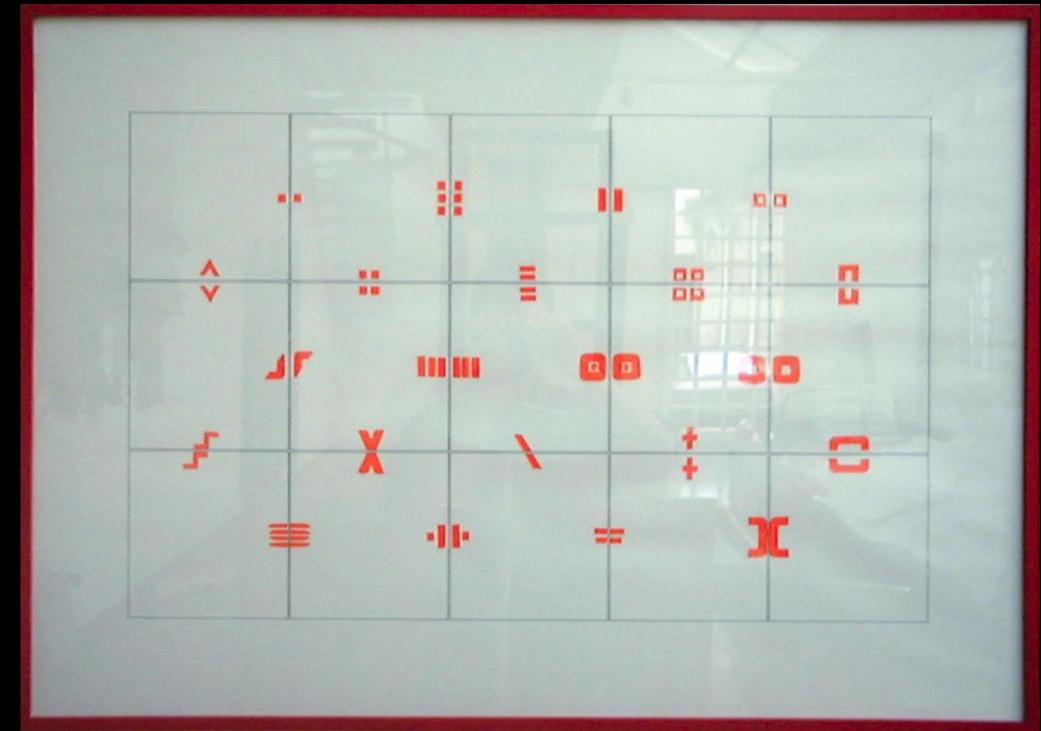
Alighiero Boetti
Senza titolo
1990

Mixed media on paper
70 x 100 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Manifesto (36 of 50)
 1991

Offset printing,
 800 copies edition of which 50 signed and numbered from 1 to 50 36/50
 100 x 70 cm



Alighiero Boetti
Senza titolo
 1967

Stickers on paper
 70 x 100 cm

Biography

1940

Alighiero Fabrizio Boetti was born on 16 December, in Turin.

1955-1961

Boetti is an autodidact. Pavese, Montale, Mann, Faulkner and above all Herman Hesse (whose complete works he read) were some of the authors who meant most to him.

Turin at the time was a highly stimulating city with an international outlook, Here the young Boetti discovered Tantric art. His initiation into contemporary art came at seventeen in Luciano Pistoï's Galleria Notizie, where he saw watercolors by Wols, works by Fontana, paintings by Gorky and Rothko, drawings by Henry Michaux and discovered Cy Twombly in 1963 (a year also notable for Balla's first major retrospective at the Galleria Civica).

1962-1964

In 1962 he met Annemarie Sauzeau, a young teacher, who became his wife in 1964; they remained married until 1987.

Boetti moved to Paris in autumn 1962. Lacking a studio, he concentrated on "chamber works": drawings in India ink on kleenex and "combustions" of small boxes of matches, By autumn '64 he had returned permanently to his apartment-studio on Via Principe Amedeo in Turin.

1965

AB moved on to a new kind of drawing in India ink, doing black Chinese shadows and silhouettes: simplified outlines of combs, tumblers and bottles, industrial equipment, desk lamps, microphones, still and movie cameras. Boetti exhibited these drawings for the first time in 1981 in Paris and ten years later at his retrospective in Bonn.

1966

On the art scene in Turin, AB tended to keep to himself. He produced numerous minimalist works. Some, in particular those using light installations which shortly preceded Ping Pong and Lampada annual. This year AB began to frequent the avantgarde galleries run by Gian Enzo Sperone and Christian Stein, where he met some young Turin-based artists, including Mondino, Gilardi, Piacentino, Paolini and Pistoletto.

1967

19 January, Galleria Christian Stein: opening of Boetti's first solo exhibition.

In the profusion of ideas, gestures and objects of '66, there was already an obsession with writing and two dimensions, with various panels devoted to language: stiff upper lip, the thin thumb, CLINO, frou frou.

In the spring following the exhibition, Boetti began what he called "panels of colors."

In this period he moved into a new studio, larger and brighter, on Corso Principe Oddone. Between the first exhibition at the Galleria Stein and his second solo show at La Bertesca in Genoa in December, he took part in all the early group exhibitions of Arte Povera in Turin, Milan and Genoa, especially "Con/temp/l'azione" curated by Daniela Palazzoli and held in the three Turin galleries Il Punto, Sperone and Stein, and "Le parole, le cose – Fluxus: Arte totale" held at the Galleria Il Punto and the Teatro Stabile.

In the summer he spent a long period in the Cinque Terre: at his home perched above the sea in the village of San Bernardino between Vernazza and Corniglia.

In December he had a solo exhibition at the Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa, with new works, among which different versions of Mimetico and three-dimensional works, all

reproduced in the catalog, the first important publication to deal with AB.

1968

This year AB produced the "sculpture" Autoritratto negativo, the photo montage Shaman-Showman and finally a second montage Gemelli, which he sent to about fifty of his friends. From this double image he derived, in 1971, his new signature "Alighiero e Boetti."

1969

On 19 April, at the first solo exhibition in the Galleria Sperone, AB presented three works in mixed media: Io prendo il sole a Torino il 24-2-1969 (its second title, later definitively modified to Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969), Portrait of Walter de Maria, Vetrata (which reduced in size became Niente da vedere niente da nascondere).

15 July, Turin: his first child, Matteo, was born.

In summer AB began a work in progress, the Viaggi postali. The work consisted in imagining the addressees had traveled to various places, 181 in all, and then sending them letters they would not receive, since they were obviously not resident at the addresses chosen. The letters that returned undelivered to the sender, AB, would be put in ever larger envelopes and forwarded to the other points on their journey (the first envelope contained the complete itinerary).

On an old map printed in black and white, AB colored in the various countries using the colors of their flags. This Planisfero politico (in two variants) was the starting point, developed in 1971, for his later embroidered maps.

1970

Boetti completed the series of Viaggi postali over the course of the year. His first Lavoro postale, based on three

different stamps (with six possible combinations, hence six envelopes), was sent to the Galleria Sperone.

He continued to experiment with squared paper. After the tracings and word squares, in 1970 he adopted a new approach: using plain sheets of copybook paper, he began writing with commas, a system he developed further in 1972 in his works in ballpoint pen.

At the end of the summer, in his passion for serial works, AB planned to place geographical features in progressive (decreasing) order, with a classification of the rivers of the world which went well beyond the modest lists found in encyclopedias. His wife was involved in the project. In October Annemarie Sauzeau started to draw up a list of the world's one thousand longest rivers.

1971

With the addition of the newly founded state of Bangladesh in March 1971, he completed a work in progress begun in 1967, a collection of geopolitical maps. The final work, titled *Dodici forme dal 10 giugno 1967*, made on copper plates, engraved after the model of his tracings on paper, was exhibited at the Galleria Sperone in summer. In autumn an edition printed on paper was issued.

Meanwhile, in late March AB left for Afghanistan and stayed there several weeks. This was the beginning of a ritual of making two visits every year which continued up until 1979.

The postal works with Italian stamps were followed by the first with stamps from Afghanistan.

During his stay in the country he created *One Hotel*, in a small mansion house with a garden in the Sharanaw residential quarter of Kabul.

In the same period AB began to produce works written in blue ballpoint pen on white cardboard which played on his name and identity: AB, ALIGHIERO

BOETTI MADE IN ITALY, ABEEGHIILOORTT, AELLEIGIACCAIFERREOBIOETITII. Then finally he began to split his identity in two by inserting "and" in his name, hence writing it "Alighiero e Boetti."

1972

On 16 March Agata, his second child, was born.

18–30 June, "Alighiero e Boetti," solo exhibition at the Galerie MTL in Brussels. This was the first time Boetti's name was given this form.

In Kabul in September Boetti arranged for the embroidering of a first small word square, *Ordine e disordine*, measuring about 20×20 cm, embroidered in many colors. He also started another type of embroidery whose title, *I Videnti* ("The Sighted") refers to the central lettering, which is interwoven with the colorful ground and so barely perceptible.

He began the cycle of ballpoint works done "in negative" (with the blank "reserve" emerging against a ground hatched in ballpoint). The structure of all of his works in biro "written" in white commas meant that each comma was given the value of a letter, being deciphered on the basis of Cartesian axes: one variable consisted of reading from left to right and the other of the letters of the alphabet.

1973

In March AB had his first solo exhibition at the John Weber Gallery in New York.

1974

In April, Boetti traveled to Afghanistan with Francesco Clemente.

AB began to produce his first *Calendari*, by selecting from the 365 sheets of an ordinary astronomical calendar only those containing one or more numbers which could be used to compose the digits of the new year, a figure that determined the variable number of works he could produce.

1975

In January and February he spent a whole month in New York with his wife, children and Salman Ali preparing his exhibition at the John Weber Gallery.

1977

On 16 February, the Marlborough Gallery in Rome presented "Alighiero e Boetti": it exhibited *Niente da vedere niente da nascondere* (1969); *720 lettere dall'Afghanistan* (1973–1974); a work in biro, *Segno e disegno*; *Collo rotto braccia lunghe* (1976) and the ink version of Gary Gilmore (1977).

AB was working with the designer Guido Fuga on the project for the *Aerei* triptych.

AB designs new medium-sized embroideries for Kabul (measuring about 50 × 60 cm) bearing long, poetic inscriptions: *Sandro Penna io vivere vorrei addormentato entro il dolce rumore della vita, Verificando il dunque e il poi se ne andò piano piano piano piano verso il canto di una pineta* (a quote from *Metastasio*) or *Ordine e disordine*, done in white on a black ground.

On 29 November, the Galleria Il Collezionista in Rome presented the triptych *Aerei*. The exhibition's exact title was "Alighiero Boetti in collaboration with Guido Fuga designer."

1978

On 5 March, the Basel Kunsthalle presented the first anthological exhibition of Boetti's work, curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann.

The book *Classifying the thousand longest rivers in the world*, finally published and presented in Basel, was promoted in various galleries.

On 14 December, he had a solo exhibition at the Galleria Stein. The invitation contained a number of phrases arranged in squares on squared paper.

1979

1979 was a year of mourning and personal instability. It began with the loss of his mother, Adelina Marchisio, on 2 March and ended with another loss, of the Afghanistan he loved, invaded by Soviet troops in December.

As earlier for his solo exhibition at the Galleria L'Ariete, he got some local schoolchildren to color in the *Faccine*, reprinted in a new and smaller edition and partly already colored.

In autumn there were more exhibitions.

1980

On 23 February, at the solo exhibition at the Salvatore Ala Gallery in New York, AB presented some essential works from the seventies, still unknown in the United States.

In June AB was invited to the 40th Venice Biennale. He exhibited the sculpture *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969*, his performance video shot by Gary Schum and presented at "Identifications" in 1970, and the large *Mappa* of 1971–1973.

A few days later, on 27 June, he went to Tokyo for a solo exhibition at the Art Agency, the leading Japanese gallery.

1981

On 21 February, he had his first exhibition in France: an anthological solo in the gallery of Chantal Crousel in Paris, "Alighiero and Boetti 1965–1981."

In spring AB rested in the countryside, then he left his family to visit the north, particularly Turin and Milan, where he found support among his dealer friends, including Franz Palludetto and Massimo Minini and organized, at their galleries, new exhibitions.

1982

By this time his relationship with his wife had broken down. The artist was living in his studio, but since it was next to

the family apartment, he continued to see his children every day. At the same time he tried to attend his exhibitions.

On 6 February, an important solo exhibition was held at the Galerie Annemarie Verna in Zurich.

On 24 July, in the Cinque Terre, he had a serious car accident that left him bedridden for two months.

1983

After a lengthy convalescence, AB began his new life in his home in the Monteverde district on the Janiculum.

In March, he had a solo exhibition at Franz Paludetto's gallery in Turin, where he displayed a single work, the white and green version of *I Mille Fiumi più lunghi del mondo*, which had just arrived from Kabul.

1984

He moved to a new studio on Via del Pantheon: the building's magnificent architectural form now appears in numerous notes and drawings by the artist, often accompanying his signature: "all'amato Pantheon" or "Accanto al Pantheon."

An important anthological exhibition titled "Alighiero Boetti" opened at the Pinacoteca Comunale in Ravenna on 15 December. For the occasion a book titled *Alighiero & Boetti*⁹⁴ was published by Alberto Boatto.

1985

The year was notable for numerous journeys and proved very productive. AB made an exploratory journey to Peshawar in Pakistan on the Afghan border, to check out the potential for resuming production of the embroideries there.

1986

In February, the Nouveau Musée of Lyon-Villeurbanne mounted a major anthological exhibition of over fifty works, organized by AB in collaboration with Giovan Battista

Salerno. The title, "Alighiero e Boetti. Insicuro noncurante," came from the 1976 portfolio. It consisted of the same systematic documentation of techniques and reviewing of the essential stages of the work done to date.

The exhibition was reprised, with the same title in Italian but with some variants in the works exhibited, at Villa Arson in Nice and at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.

Boetti took part for the third time in the Venice Biennale, now in its 42nd edition.

1987

The focus of AB's interest continued to be on "private" works on paper, with the cheerful presence of a jungle of animals and the use of the technique of folded paper.

In February the Galleria Lucio Amelio in Naples presented a memorable exhibition titled "Tra sé e sé," referring to the mirror image of the artist's head and hands, presented in black and white in the seventies and here reprised in colored India ink, abstract motifs and calligraphy.

On 5 December, in New York, the John Weber Gallery presented a solo exhibition with eleven versions of *Tra sé e sé*, all from 1987, a drawing in mixed media titled *Via del Pantheon 57*, the image used on the invitation, and two long friezes based on a collage of *Cartoline astratte* and *Cartoline etrusche e altre*.

1988

In 1988 Boetti began to have the embroideries sewn in Peshawar (Pakistan) by immigrant Afghan families.

Of particular interest were two exhibitions held in Milan: "Alighiero Boetti – opere 1968–1981" at the Galleria Massimo de Carlo and "Alighiero e Boetti. 'ALTERNANDO...' tra tecniche diverse 1970–1986" at the Galleria di Porta Ticinese. AB purchased a new home in Rome on Via di Teatro Pace. He moved in after restoring it in 1989, while keeping his

studio at the Pantheon.

1989

The busy rhythms of work in the previous years, when AB produced drawings on paper while delegating embroideries and ballpoints to others, gave way to a period mainly of promotion and exhibitions.

He was represented at various important solo and group shows, above all in Europe.

1990

On 16 February, his second solo exhibition "Alighiero e Boetti," opened at the Galleria Lucio Amelio in Naples, with a long frieze "populated by a colorful fauna of rhinoceroses, panthers, his beloved dolphins, swordfish and monkeys. The greatest pleasure in the world is to invent the world as it is without inventing anything."

On 6 March, the solo exhibition "Alighiero e Boetti" at the Galerie Adrien Thomas presented two large compositions in ballpoint pen: Uno Nove Otto Otto made up of four elements (1988) and Mettere al mondo il mondo of twelve elements (1978), a Mappa from 1983, a Tutto and a number of large Ricami di lettere, in which the Persian alphabet was interwoven with the Italian.

AB also participated in the 44th edition of the Venice Biennale, with a personal room in the Italian pavilion curated by L. Cherubini, F. Baldoni and L. Vergine. He exhibited a continuous frieze that ran along the walls for 54 meters. In the lower part of the wall he presented ten other large works on paper. On this occasion he was awarded the Jury's special Prize. In September he married Caterina Raganelli.

On 17 November, Salvatore Ala in New York presented "Alighiero e Boetti," a true anthological exhibition starting from the Arte Povera period, passing through the archetypes

of the conceptual period (a vast postal work, the ballpoint *Mettere al mondo il mondo* and the large triptych of *Aerei* in watercolor) and some especially significant embroideries such as *Ordine e Disordine*, a *Mappa* of '74 in a hundred embroideries and a monochrome embroidery from '89.

1991

AB increasingly used new technical instruments, light and rapid, related to innovations in communication: photocopies, faxes, in any case sheets of paper in commercial format. This gave rise to the series in A4 format he called Extra-strong. Each sheet, worked in pencil, colored inks, collages and various postmarks, became an illuminated microcosm, the page of a codex or diary.

He traveled less, preferring to send his collaborators, his children Matteo and Agata or his wife Caterina, to Peshawar. Alighiero seems to have worn himself out organizing his individual and collective works. He lived in greater isolation. He was concerned at the effects of the financial crisis (due to the First Gulf War) and sought refuge in the "artificial paradises" which he had never wholly abandoned.

1992

In February 1992 Boetti's third child, Giordano, was born.

On 28 September, the Kunstverein in Bonn inaugurated the important solo exhibition curated by Annelie Pohlen, which then moved to Münster and Lucerne. The title was taken from a text by Gustav Jung, *Synchronicity as a Non-Causal Principle of Events*.

It was chosen by AB both for its content, close to his favorite subject of "happy coincidences," and because it lent itself to being inscribed (in German, consisting of forty-nine letters) in a magic square of 7 × 7. The subtitle was "Alighiero e Boetti 1965–1991."

For the exhibition at the Magasin in Grenoble, scheduled for

late '93, AB began work on fifty khilim rugs in collaboration with Adelina von Furstenberg, director of the art center. He designed them to the same rule as Altermando da 1 a 100 e viceversa

AB went to Peshawar to meet the master carpet weaver Azam. He also made a journey to that "region of the soul," as Caterina, who accompanied him, recalls, amid the mountains whose Pakistani side he had never seen before. It was "the last destination visited, the region of Rakaposhi (7,788 meters) in the mountain system of Korakorum which, continuing the Himalayas westward, joins up with the chain of the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan."

1993

AB planned to make seven bronze copies of the Self-portrait, a complex sculpture conceived twenty years before. Three were made in '94, the others only later. In June, the first example was presented at the exhibition "Sonsbeek 93" and permanently installed in the park of the Dutch museum in Arnhem.

In March, a solo exhibition was held at the Galleria Christian Stein in Turin. The exhibits ranged from his very earliest works in 1966, never exhibited before, to some that were present in his first solo exhibition in '67. This was to be AB's last solo exhibition in Italy. Christian Stein had also presented his first.

Among the artists participating in "Trésors de voyage," AB again encountered Bruly-Bouabré and, as previously agreed, confirmed the invitation to stay in his farmhouse in Todi. Unfortunately, in summer AB was diagnosed as having tumors in the lungs and head, seriously jeopardizing his work.

On 26 October, in Paris, his sculpture Self-portrait was installed as a point de mire in the great lobby of the Centre Pompidou, while in Rome AB, working frenetically,

completed preparations for the complex exhibition in Grenoble.

With great fortitude AB succeeded in being present at the opening ceremony in Grenoble on 27 November.

1994

There were two outstanding exhibitions this year. Though AB was unfortunately unable to be present, he supervised and arranged them.

On 17 February, "Origine et destination, Alighiero e Boetti – Martin Hübler" opened at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, curated by Marianne van Leeuw and Annas Pontégnie. The exhibition, a dialog between two founders of international conceptual art, included an interactive work involving the public, using a mechanism for the selection of photocopied images that recalled Boetti's practice with his "red books." The artist was unable to attend the event.