

Press Release

Alighiero Boetti

Insecure Unconcerned

March 28–May 25, 2024

Public Reception: March 27, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, New York

Sprüth Magers

At the core of Alighiero Boetti's inventive and conceptually rigorous practice lies a philosophical interest in the liminal space between polarities. Raising existential questions centered around the theme of *ordine e disordine* (order and disorder), his modern parables and metaphors playfully delve into the complexities and contradictions of the human condition. Interested in the impossibility of formalizing the world itself, Boetti's work aims to describe and grasp the present. His conceptual repertoire is based on the temporal and processual dimensions of art and continues to have great influence on contemporary thought.

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are honored to present *Insecure Unconcerned*, a solo exhibition of works by Boetti, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the artist's death. The show at the New York gallery is dedicated to the late Pasquale Leccese, who, before he died last year, was planning to curate a celebration of his friend Alighiero. Comprising artworks from four decades and providing an overview of his seminal oeuvre, the exhibition will include *Insicuro Noncurante* (1966–75), *Tutto* (1988) and *Mappa* (1989), "Biro" drawings (1975–78), selected "Arazzi" (1977–94), and *Aerei* (1983–89), alongside rich archival material.

Anchoring the show is a portfolio of eighty-one numbered sheets, *Insicuro Noncurante*, a compendium of Boetti's artistic production between 1966 and 1975. The manifold works on paper outline the fundamental concepts underpinning his extraordinary artistic universe: order and chaos, coincidence and necessity, seeking and finding, similarity and difference, and singularity and multiplicity. These key themes are perhaps best embodied by a 1968 work titled *Gemelli (Twins)*. A postcard in an edition of fifty sent to friends depicted the artist as a set of twins, surreally holding hands with himself. The doubling and splitting of personality continued not long after when he changed his name to Alighiero e Boetti (Alighiero and Boetti). Tellingly, the figures in *Twins* are connected by their clasped hands, as are the divided names by their conjunction, implying the oppositions held within one person and the duality of everything.

Eschewing the supposed significance of the hand of the artist, Boetti often asked third parties to execute his work. As with all of his embroidery projects, Boetti's conceptual direction meets the traditional craftsmanship of Afghan embroiderers.

Take, for example, *Tutto*, which appears to represent “everything” in the object-filled world, or *Mappa*, which reflects on the systems and classifications we apply to the natural world. The artist provided the idea and created the designs, while the artisans chose the magnificent colors and produced the tapestries. On their surfaces too, sign systems, languages, and ideas converge, conveying a cultural dialogue between East and West.

Highlighted by a section that resembles an artist’s studio – walls covered in sketches, ideas, references, photographs, letters – *Insecure Unconcerned* showcases how Boetti’s wide-ranging interest in philosophy, mathematics and linguistics percolates his entire oeuvre. The salon hang emphasizes the artist’s associative thinking, visualizing the point of departure for all works on display. Installed among the archival documents are polychromatic word embroideries known as “Arazzi.” Individual letters are set against differently colored square grounds, which are organized into a grid to form phrases and proverbs. Logic and order determine the size of each identical square, the positioning of the letter within, as well as the work’s sentence, while disorder is introduced through the colors and the experience of reading the work. A synthesis of writing and image, Boetti’s word pictures reveal order and its antonym to be far from antithetical – rather, they are interdependent.

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Sprüth Magers thanks Agata Boetti for her collaboration. Concurrently with the show, the gallery is delighted to host a presentation of Agata Boetti’s four latest projects and publications that foreground different facets of her father’s artistic thinking: *Insicuro Noncurante e il Manuale di Conoscenza*, *Le Vernici Industriali*, *Chi gioca da solo non perde mai*, and *Boetti da colorare*.

Alighiero Boetti (1940–94). Recent institutional group exhibitions include National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (2022), Centre Pompidou-Metz (2021), Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2019), Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2017), The Drawing Center, New York (2016). Selected solo exhibitions include Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2011, traveled to Tate Modern and Museum of Modern Art, New York), Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2002), Whitechapel Gallery, London (1999), Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (1997), Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Rome (1996), La Biennale di Venezia (1995), Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1994), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1994), Kunsthalle Basel (1978) and Centre d’Art Contemporain, Geneva (1977).

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