



Alighiero Boetti
7 May–22 November 2026



Alighiero Boetti, *Mappa*, 1979, embroidery on canvas, 92 x 130 cm. (36 1/4 x 51 1/8 in.) © Alighiero Boetti 2026 DACS

Venice, 6th May – SMAC Venice is delighted to present *Alighiero Boetti*, a major exhibition dedicated to Italian post-war master Alighiero Boetti (Turin, 1940 – Rome, 1994). Curated by Elena Geuna and supported by Ben Brown Fine Arts, the exhibition will be on view from 7 May to 22 November 2026, coinciding with the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

Bringing together approximately eighty works across eight galleries, the exhibition offers an expansive survey of one of the most influential artists of the post-war period. Spanning more than twenty-five years, from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, it traces the full arc of Boetti's artistic trajectory and highlights the breadth and complexity of his practice.

Conceived as a constellation that invites viewers to inhabit the space between idea and form, order and disorder, Alighiero Boetti reflects the artist's enduring interest in duality, systems and process. From his early works rooted in simple materials and elementary structures as proposed by the Arte Povera group, to later collaborative and conceptually layered projects, the presentation foregrounds the internal coherence of a practice that consistently tested its own premises while embracing chance, repetition and shared authorship as generative forces.

The exhibition opens with a room devoted to self-portraiture and the question of identity, addressing Boetti's lifelong engagement with the notion of the double. This inquiry found its clearest expression in 1972, when he adopted the dual signature "Alighiero e Boetti." Works such as *Autoritratto* (1969) and *Gemelli* (1968) explore identity as split, mirrored, and multiplied, while the artist's use of paired forms and serial structures introduces a logic of duality that would remain fundamental to his practice.

As the exhibition unfolds, this logic of doubling expands into broader systems of language, geography and time. Boetti's work increasingly turns toward structures that organise vision and knowledge while simultaneously exposing their instability. His sustained engagement with mapping reflects an interest in orientation, distance and the circulation of information, labour and modes of production across cultures. Beginning in the early 1970s, the *Biro* drawings (1972-), together with the embroidered *Ricami* (1971-) and *Mappe* (1971), produced through long-standing collaborations with Afghan artisans, exemplify a deliberate displacement of authorship. Boetti established the conceptual framework and governing parameters of each work, while its execution unfolded through other hands, allowing difference, duration and contingency to become integral to both form and meaning.

The latter sections of the exhibition focus on the *Aerei* (from 1977-), *Calendari* (1974-), and the serial, conceptually rigorous works on paper produced during the 1980s and early 1990s. In the *Aerei*, permutational structures generate disorienting fields in which images of flight are subjected to systems that are at once methodical and unstable, allowing order and chaos to collide within a rational, classified framework. The steady accumulation of dates in the *Calendari*, alongside the repeated deployment of graphic elements across his works on paper, similarly registers time as both measure and material. Taken together, these series articulate an ongoing process in which systems are set in motion only to expose their own limits, staging a sustained, often playful exchange between control and contingency.

The exhibition benefitted from the support and collaboration of the Archivio Alighiero Boetti. It is conceived to present artist's journey with clarity and balance, allowing viewers to trace the evolution of his ideas and to engage with the enduring tensions at the core of his practice. Structure and chance, autonomy and collaboration, system and play are held in a productive relationship, revealing a body of work that remains both rigorous and open, and consistently attentive to the complexity of the world it reflects.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition, featuring texts by Elena Geuna and Hans Ulrich Obrist. Special thanks to the Archivio Alighiero Boetti for their invaluable scientific guidance.

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Exhibition details

Alighiero Boetti

SMAC Venice (San Marco Art Centre)

7 May – 22 November 2026

Open daily (closed Tuesdays)

10 am–6 pm

Procuratie, Piazza San Marco, 105

Venice 30124

smacvenice.org

About Alighiero Boetti

Alighiero Boetti (1940–1994) was born in Turin, where he made his debut in Arte Povera in January 1967, settling in Rome in 1972. A wide-ranging conceptual artist, he developed varied bodies of work, at times delegating their execution according to precise rules guided by 'necessity and chance'. These include the *Mappe*, coloured planispheres produced over time as records of political change; the *Biro* works (in blue, black, red and green), where dense dotting forms fields of language; multicoloured letter embroideries; the *Tutto*, intricate compositions combining silhouettes of objects and animals with images from magazines and printed matter; postal works based on mathematical permutations of stamps and the unpredictability of their journeys. Time, in its steady and unavoidable flow, unites the breadth of his forms and imagery. Boetti took part in many landmark exhibitions of his generation, including *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), *Contemporanea* (1973), *Identité italienne* (1981) and *The Italian Metamorphosis 1943–1968* (1994). He exhibited several times at the Venice Biennale, with a dedicated room in 1990, a posthumous tribute in 2001 and a major exhibition at the Fondazione Cini in 2017. In recent years, the major retrospective *Game Plan* was presented at MoMA, New York; Tate, London; and the Reina Sofía, Madrid (2011-2012). His work is held in numerous Italian and international museum collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Stedelijk Museum; and MOCA, Los Angeles.

About Elena Geuna

Independent curator, author and art advisor, Elena Geuna curated several exhibitions, including two dedicated to Lucio Fontana, at Palazzo Ducale, Genoa (2008) and at the MAMM in Moscow (2019). Notable exhibitions encompass *Arte Povera in Moscow*, MAMM, Moscow (2011); *Rudolf Stingel*, (2011) and *Sigmar Polke* (2016) both at Palazzo Grassi, Venice; *Damien Hirst: Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana in Venice (2017). She co-curated three exhibitions of Jeff Koons: at Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (2003); at the Château de Versailles, Versailles (2008); and at Mucem, Marseille (2021). In 2022, she curated the project *Indistinti Confini* with Giuseppe Penone at Parco della Trucca in Bergamo, and in 2023, the exhibition *Christo: Early Works* in London. In 2025 she curated the exhibition *Alighiero e Boetti. Embellishing the Sky* at Ben Brown Fine Arts in London, a show dedicated to the artist's series *Aerei*.

Elena Geuna is co-curator with Christopher Rothko of the major retrospective *Rothko in Florence*, taking place at Palazzo Strozzi (2026) as well as at the Museo di San Marco and the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

About SMAC Venice

SMAC Venice (San Marco Art Centre) opened in Piazza San Marco in May 2025. Each year, it presents a vibrant program of exhibitions spanning art, design, fashion, and film, inviting both specialists and the wider public to discover new ideas.

Located inside the Procuratie on Piazza San Marco, the centre occupies a landmark building restored by Pritzker Prize-winning architect David Chipperfield and reimagined as a hub for culture and social inclusion. SMAC Venice's location has been made possible due to a landmark agreement with Generali, the owner of the Procuratie. The third floor also houses the Home of the Human Safety Net and its interactive exhibition, *A World of Potential*.

Across 16 galleries, SMAC Venice explores unexpected perspectives, challenges convention, and asks rigorous questions about contemporary visual culture and its connections to history, science, philosophy, and society. Experimental in spirit, it tests traditional models of exhibition-making and welcomes collaboration, offering artists and institutions a platform in Venice. At its core is the belief that the arts are essential to human experience and to the vitality of cities and communities.

About Ben Brown Fine Arts

Ben Brown Fine Arts is an international gallery specialising in post-war and contemporary art with locations in London, Hong Kong and New York. Founded in London's Mayfair in 2004, the gallery operates across both primary and secondary markets and represents a group of leading contemporary artists including Tony Bevan, Awol Erizku, Candida Höfer, Vik Muniz, Yoan Capote, Nabil Nahas, Gavin Turk, José Parlá, Enoc Perez and Ena Swansea. Alongside its contemporary programme, Ben Brown Fine Arts is known for exhibitions of post-war figures such as Alighiero Boetti, Frank Auerbach, Alexander Calder, Lucio Fontana, Gerhard Richter and Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne. The gallery expanded to Hong Kong in 2009, opened a seasonal space in Palm Beach in 2021, and established a New York gallery in 2024. Recent

landmark exhibition projects include *Planète Lalanne* at the 60th Venice Biennale (2024), *Calder: Extreme Cantilever* (London, 2024), and *Alighiero e Boetti: Embellishing the Sky* (London, 2025). The gallery participates regularly in international art fairs, including Art Basel (Basel, Hong Kong and Miami Beach), Frieze Masters, TEFAF (Maastricht and New York), Miart, the Armory Show and Art Mumbai.