



ALIGHIERO BOETTI

EMBROIDERIES

9 FEBRUARY - 28 APRIL 2016

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to present this catalogue to accompany my third Alighiero Boetti exhibition. This show centres exclusively on Boetti's embroideries, an iconic and integral part of his oeuvre. For a lengthy discourse on how and why he embarked on embroideries to narrate his vision of his art I highly recommend Dr. Rolf Lauter's introductory essay to my last Alighiero Boetti catalogue and Mark Godfrey's excellent book *Alighiero e Boetti*.

This exhibition concentrates on Boetti's *arazzi piccoli* (small embroideries) in order to demonstrate that they are not just presents for god children but also great standalone works of art which not only have great visual impact, but also encapsulate so much of what Boetti was all about – reinforcing his fondness for language and wordplay, raising questions of authorship, embracing order and disorder, championing colour and the element of surprise and, perhaps most importantly, the *arazzi* became a

vehicle by which to transport messages from one place and time to another. They include a sense of poetry and more specifically the concept of communication between people. Each phrase and riddle, presented in a grid to deconstruct the words, represents a vital notion in Boetti's art and therefore when choosing which *arazzo* to buy, the personal poetry should be taken into account. They are a huge pleasure to look at and live with.

Their origins in Afghanistan and Pakistan hold great resonance in the world of 2016, possibly even more than in the 1970s and 1980s when Boetti was travelling to and from that region on a regular basis.

My family and I all love them and I sincerely hope that you will too.

Ben Brown
London

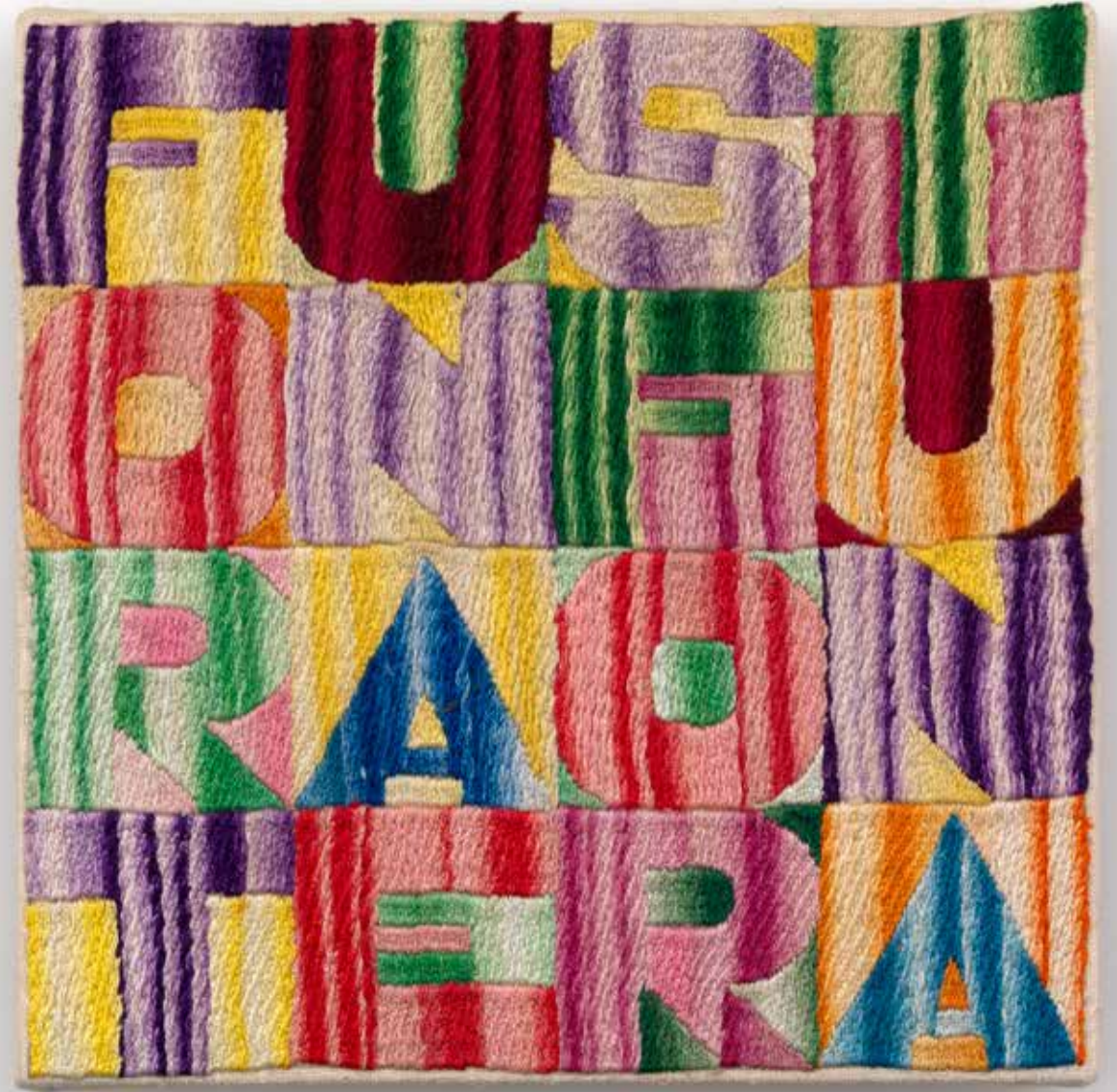
PLATES



Attirare l'Attenzione, 1985
Embroidery
4 parts, 21.5 x 22 cm. (8 1/2 x 8 5/8 in.) each

Coperte e Scoperte, 1992
Embroidery
17 x 18 cm. (6 3/4 x 7 in.)





Fortuna e Sfortuna, 1994
Embroidery
17.5 x 17.7 cm. (6 7/8 x 7 in.)

Cinque x Cinque Venticinque, c. 1988
Embroidery
24 x 21 cm. (9 1/2 x 8 1/4 in.)

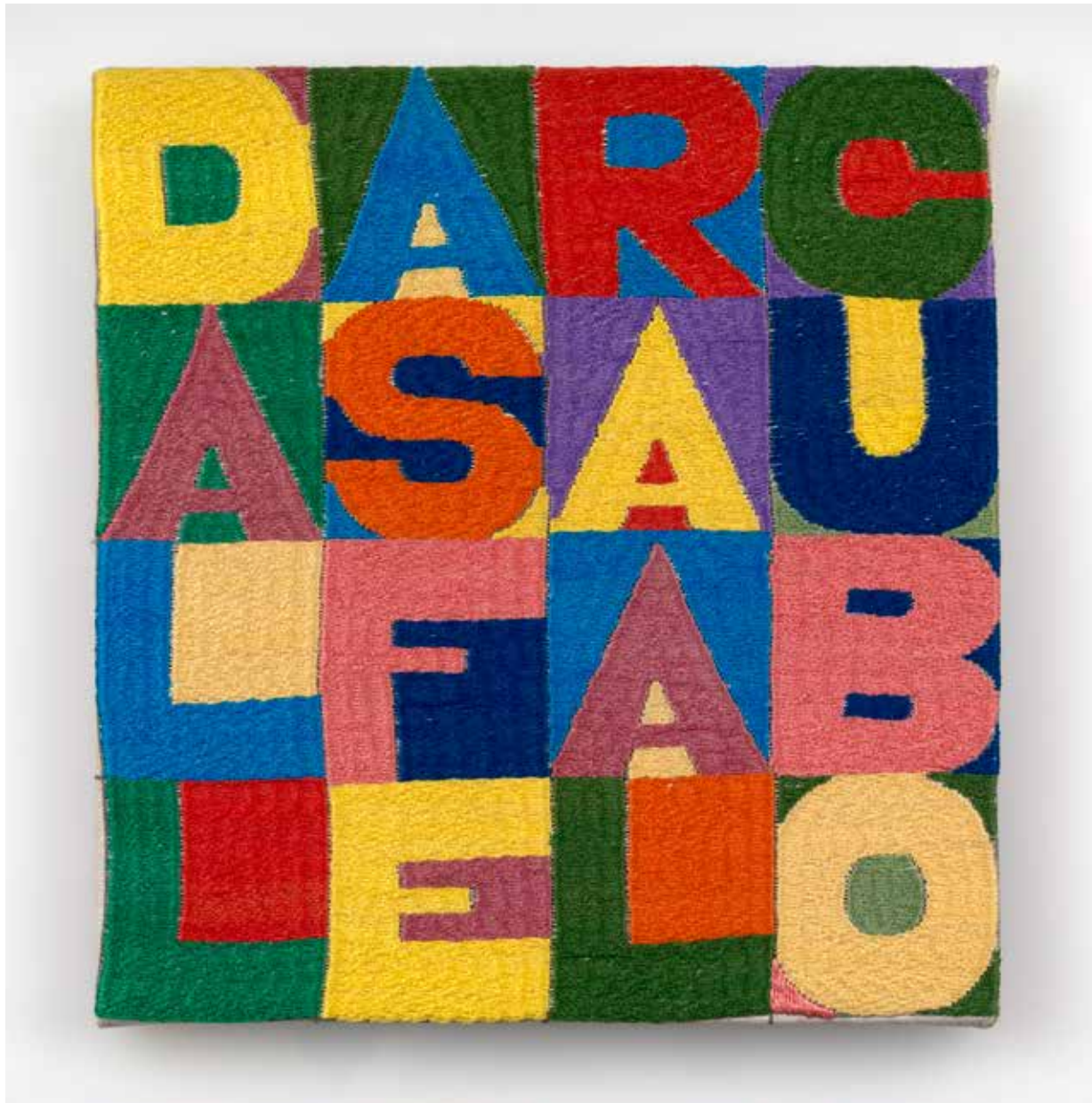


Cinque x Cinque Venticinque, 1988
Embroidery
22 x 22 cm. (8 5/8 x 8 5/8 in.)





D'un Jour à l'Autre, 1991
Embroidery
17.5 x 18.5 cm. (6 7/8 x 7 1/4 in.)



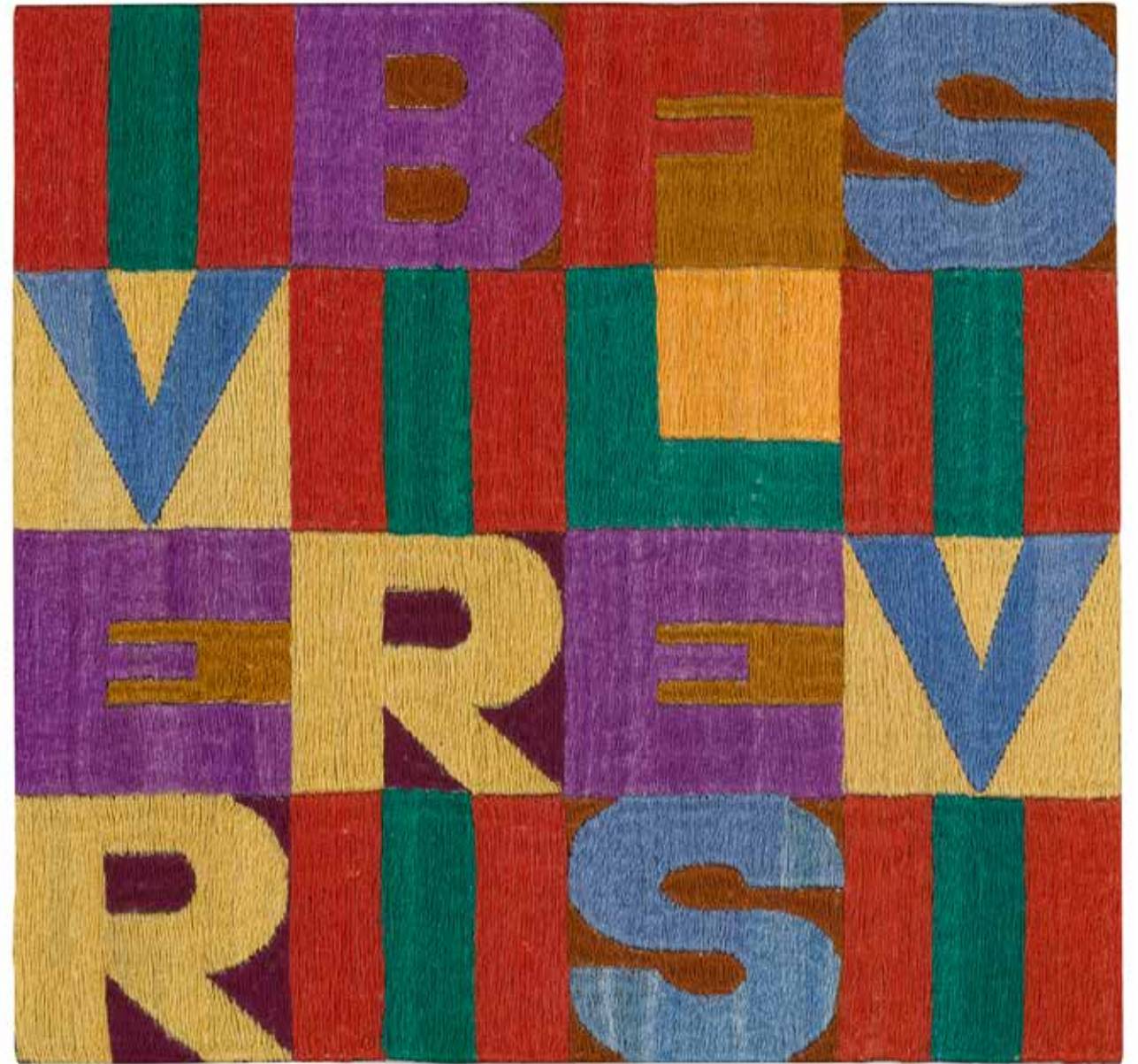
Dalla Sfera al Cubo, 1988
Embroidery
18.5 x 17.5 cm. (7 1/4 x 6 7/8 in.)



Dalla Sfera al Cubo, c. 1992
Embroidery
18.6 x 17.6 cm. (7 3/8 x 6 7/8 in.)

Dimenticare il Tempo Passato, 1990
Embroidery
22.2 × 22.2 cm. (8 3/4 × 8 3/4 in.)





I Verbi Riflessivi, 1979
Embroidery
23 x 24 cm. (9 1/8 x 9 1/2 in.)



De Bouche à Oreille, 1993
Embroidery
17.5 × 17.5 cm. (6 7/8 × 6 7/8 in.)



Svelare e Rivelare, 1988
Embroidery
16.8 x 17.9 cm. (6 5/8 x 7 1/8 in.)



Il Peggio è Passato, 1993
Embroidery
17.5 x 19 cm. (6 7/8 x 7 1/2 in.)



La Forza del Centro, 1990
Embroidery
23 × 23.5 cm. (9 1/8 × 9 1/4 in.)



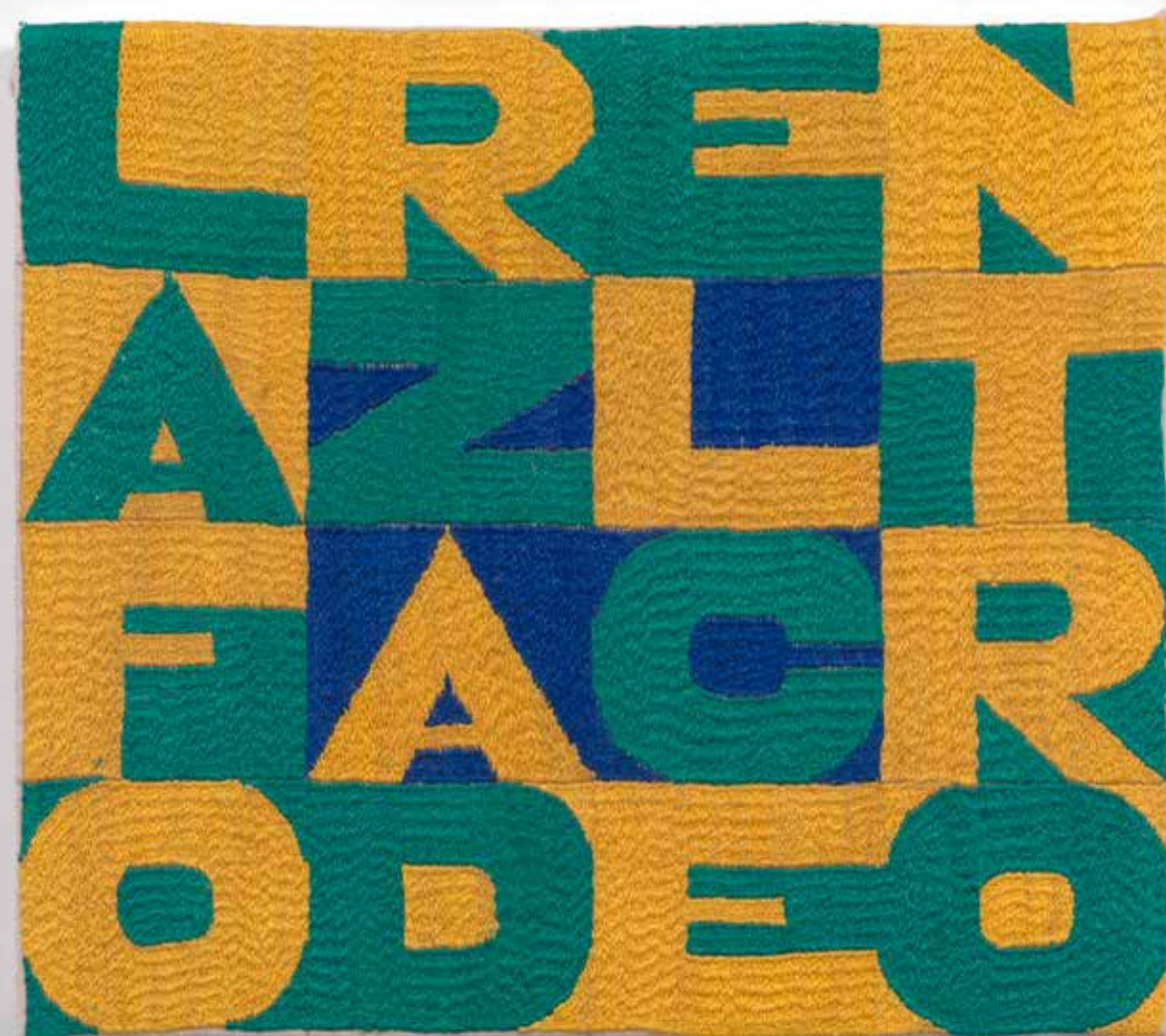
La Forza del Centro, 1989
Embroidery
23 x 24.5 cm. (9 1/8 x 9 5/8 in.)



La Forza del Centro, 1990
Embroidery
23 x 24.5 cm. (9 1/8 x 9 5/8 in.)



La Forza del Centro, 1990
Embroidery
21.8 × 24.5 cm. (8 5/8 × 9 5/8 in.)



La Forza del Centro, 1990
Embroidery
21.5 × 24.5 cm. (8 1/2 × 9 5/8 in.)

Segno e Disegno, 1990
Embroidery
18 x 18.5 cm. (7 x 7 1/4 in.)

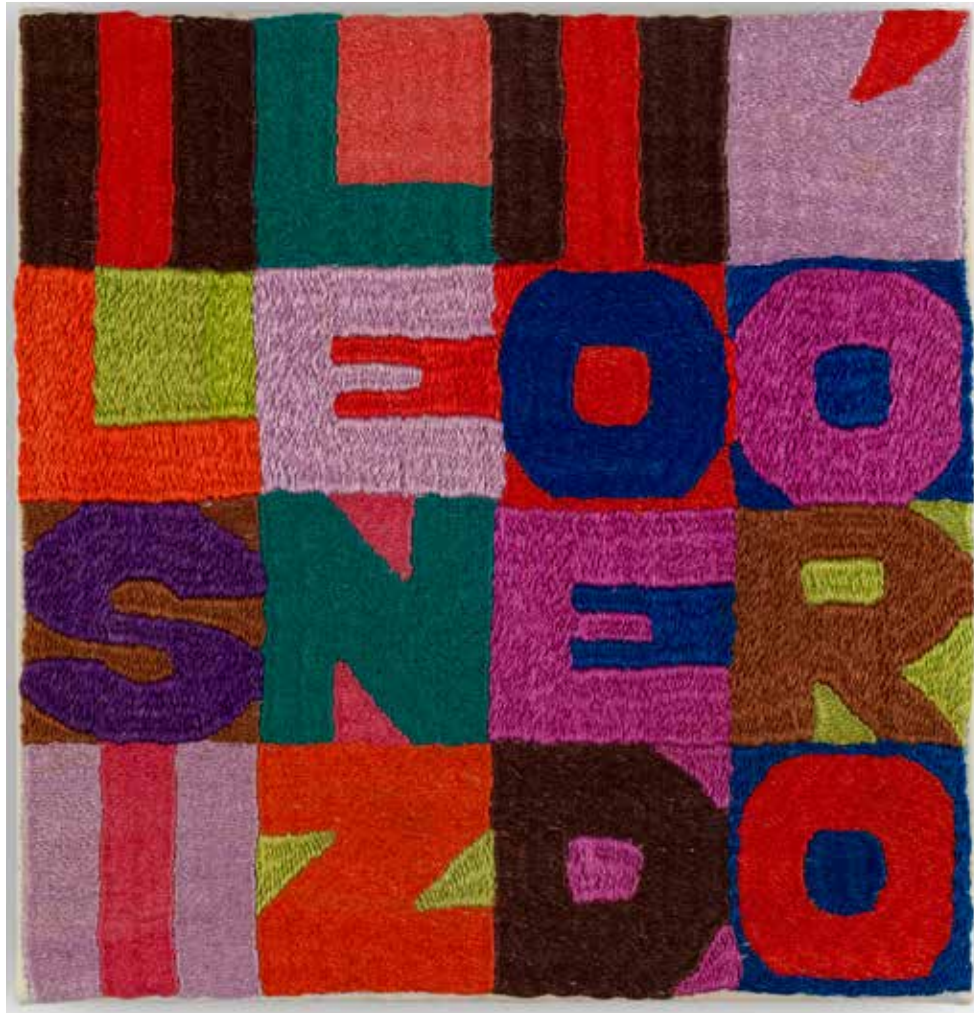


Entre Chien et Loup, c. 1990
Embroidery
17.5 x 17 cm. (6 7/8 x 6 3/4 in.)

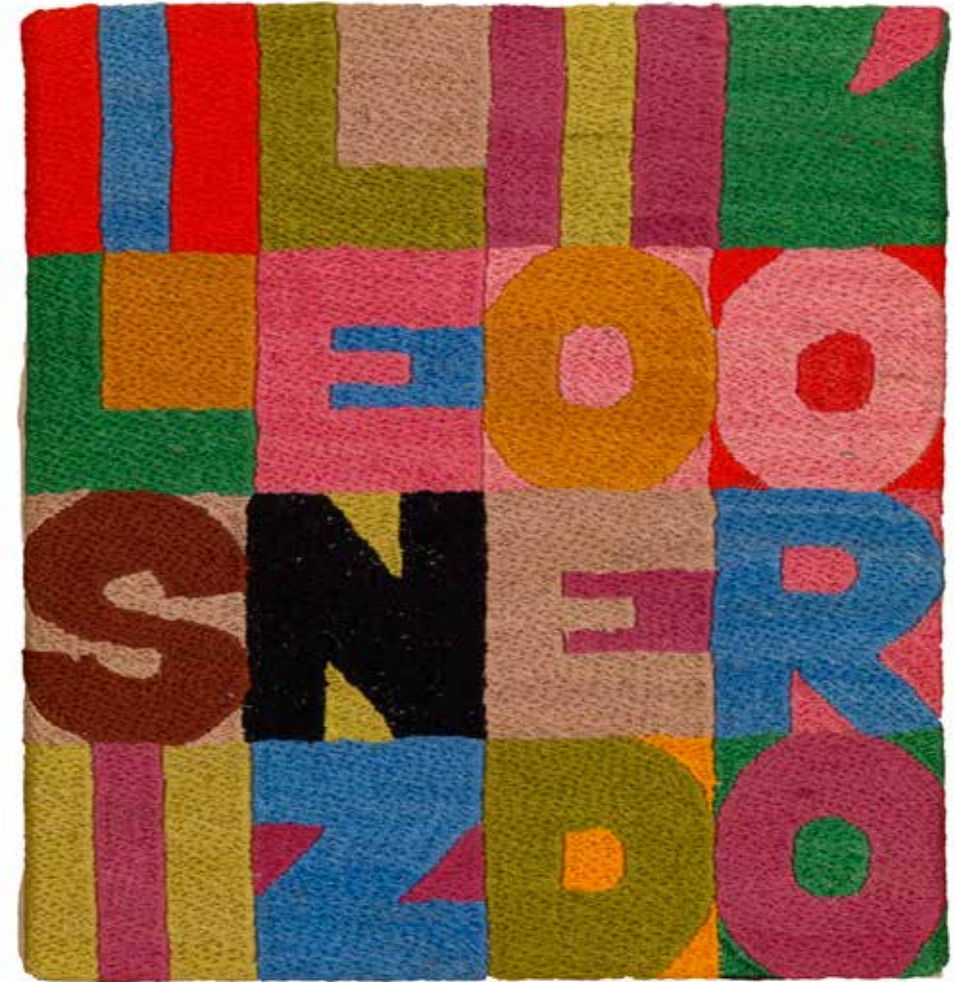


Incontri e Scontri, 1988
Embroidery
18 x 17.5 cm. (7 x 6 7/8 in.)





Il Silenzio è d'Oro, 1988
Embroidery
18.4 x 17.3 cm. (7 1/4 x 6 3/4 in.)



Il Silenzio è d'Oro, 1988
Embroidery
18.2 x 17 cm. (7 1/8 x 6 3/4 in.)

Le Nuove Autonomie, 1979
Embroidery
5 parts, 23 x 24 cm. (9 1/8 x 9 1/2 in.) each





Un Pozzo Senza Fine, c. 1991
Embroidery
24.6 x 24 cm. (9 3/4 x 9 1/2 in.)

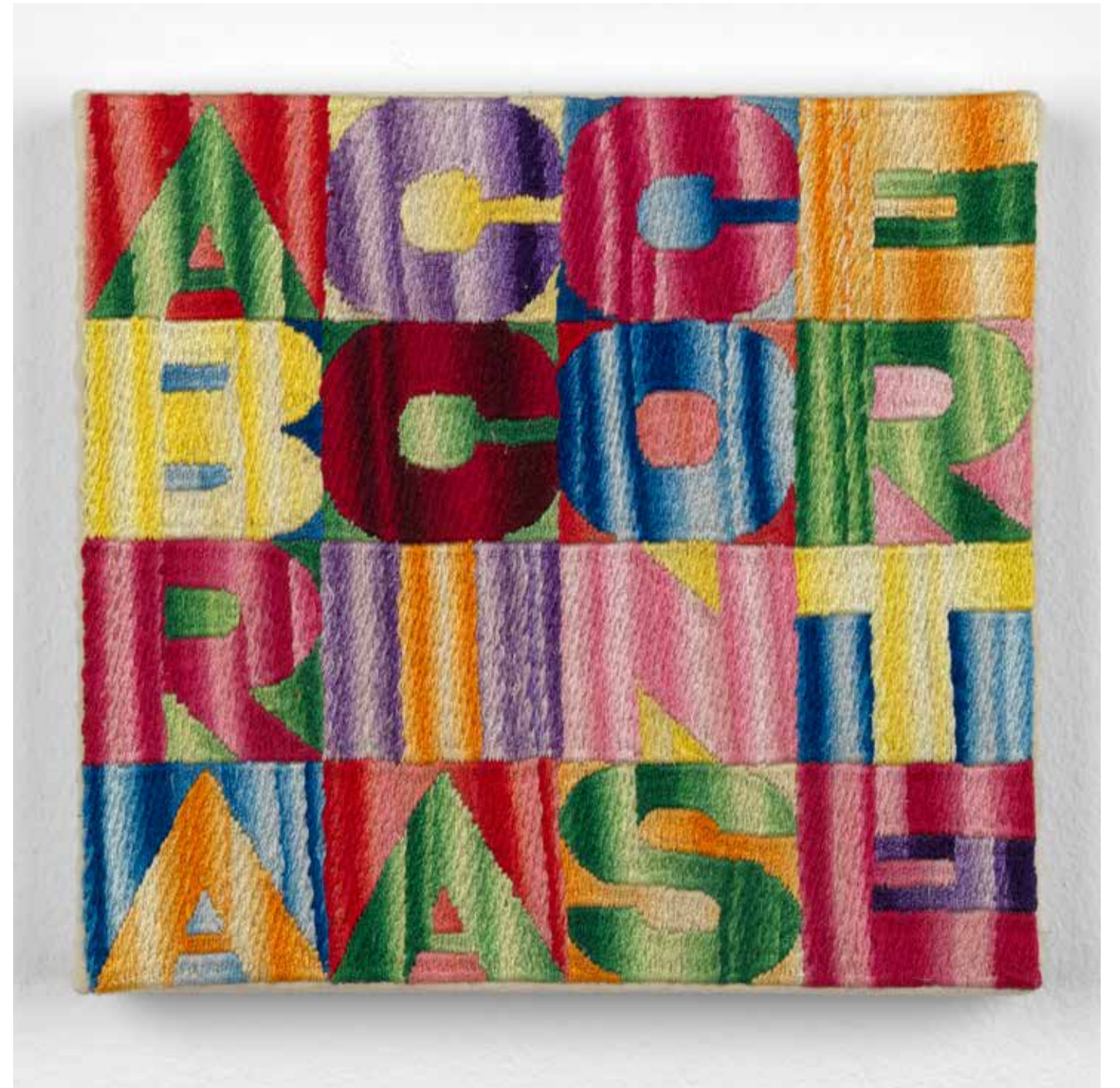


Un Pozzo Senza Fine, c. 1991
Embroidery
24 x 22.5 cm. (9 1/2 x 8 7/8 in.)

Fortuna e Sfortuna, c. 1994
Embroidery
17 x 18.2 cm. (6 3/4 x 7 1/8 in.)



A Braccia Conserte, 1993
Embroidery
16.5 x 17.5 cm. (6 1/2 x 6 7/8 in.)





Uno Nove Sette Otto, 1978
Embroidery
17.5 x 18.5 cm. (6 7/8 x 7 1/4 in.)



Leggere e Scrivere, 1990
Embroidery
17.1 × 18.1 cm. (6 3/4 × 7 1/8 in.)



Leggere e Scrivere, 1990
Embroidery
18 × 18 cm. (7 × 7 in.)

Languidi Sguardi Assassini, 1989
Embroidery
27.2 x 28.3 cm. (10 3/4 x 11 1/8 in.)



Cercando il Centro, 1990
Embroidery
17.5 x 18.5 cm. (6 7/8 x 7 1/4 in.)



Verba Volant Scripta Manent, 1987
Embroidery
23 x 21.5 cm. (9 1/8 x 8 1/2 in.)





Talvolta Sole Talvolta Luna, 1986
Embroidery
21.8 x 20.5 cm. (8 5/8 x 8 1/8 in.)

Simmetrie Speculari, 1990
Embroidery
27.7 x 25.5 cm. (10 7/8 x 10 1/8 in.)





Sciogliersi Come Neve al Sole, 1986
Embroidery
22 x 20.5 cm. (8 5/8 x 8 1/8 in.)

Sciogliersi Come Neve al Sole, 1979
Embroidery
24 x 22 cm. (9 1/2 x 8 5/8 in.)



Le Infinite Possibilità di Esistere, 1990
Embroidery
33.3 x 34.3 cm. (13 1/8 x 13 1/2 in.)



Le Infinite Possibilità di Esistere, 1992
Embroidery
33.5 x 35.5 cm. (13 1/4 x 14 in.)



Le Infinite Possibilità di Esistere, 1985
Embroidery
25.5 × 26.5 cm. (10 1/8 × 10 3/8 in.)



Millenovecentottantotto, 1988
Embroidery
22.5 x 23 cm. (8 7/8 x 9 1/8 in.)



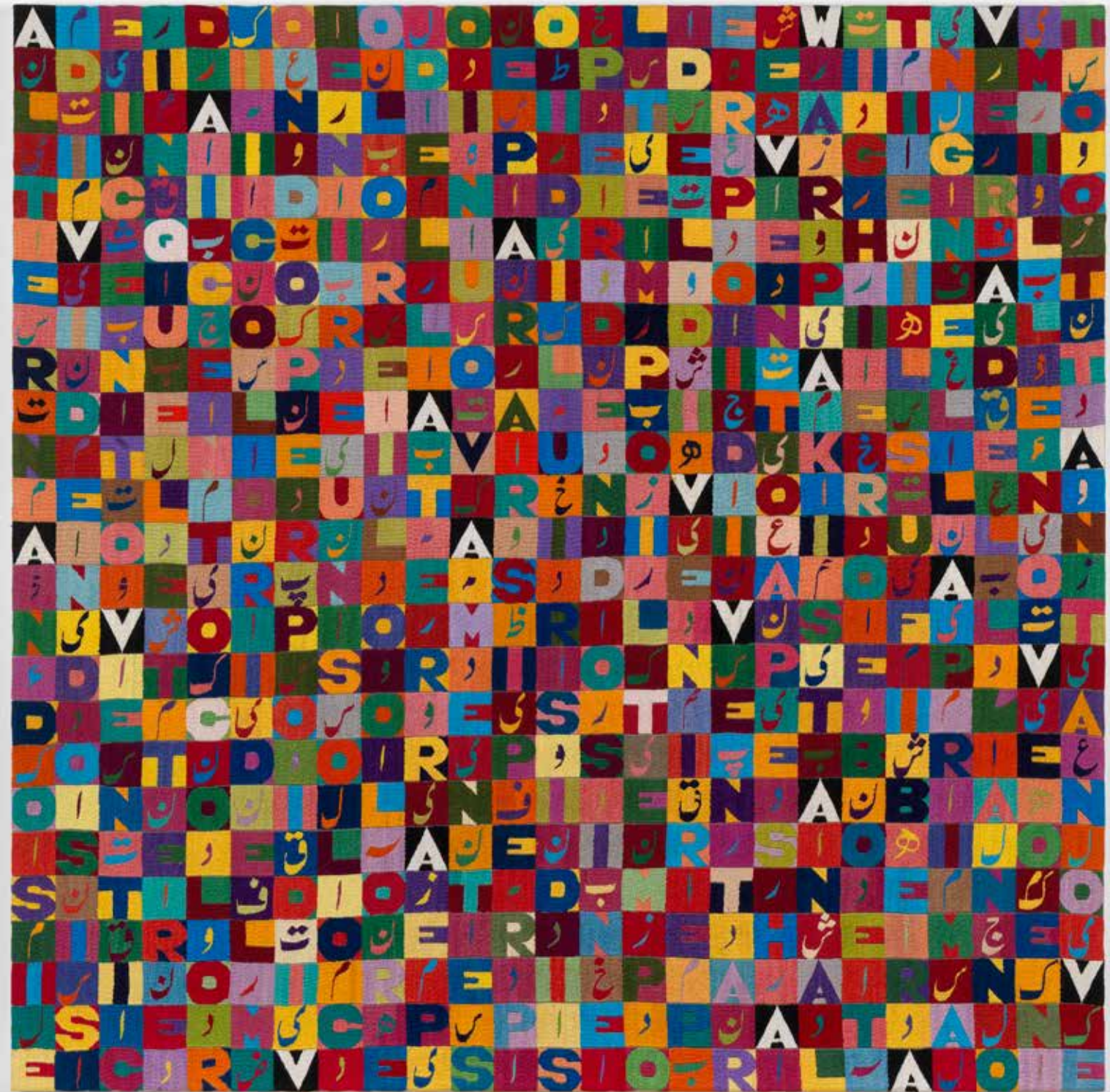
Tra L'Incudine e il Martello, 1987
Embroidery
21.5 x 23 cm. (8 1/2 x 9 1/8 in.)



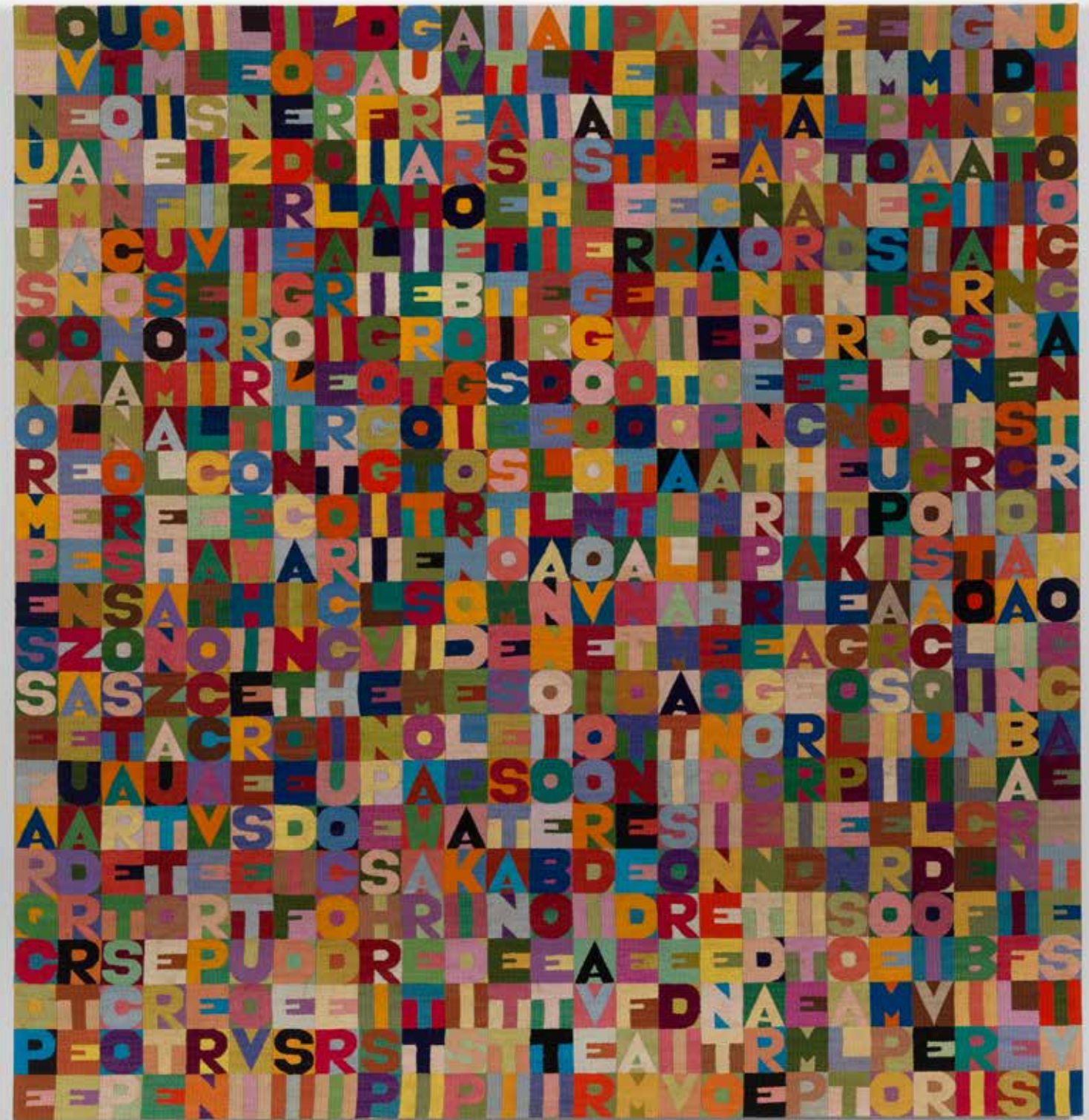
Tra l'Incudine e il Martello, c. 1988
Embroidery
21.2 x 22.7 cm. (8 3/8 x 9 in.)



Alternandosi e Dividendosi, 1989
Embroidery
107 x 107 cm. (42 1/8 x 42 1/8 in.)



Le Nuove Autonomie, 1988
Embroidery
100 × 100 cm. (39 3/8 × 39 3/8 in.)





BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Alighiero Boetti was born in Turin, Italy, in 1940 and lived and worked in Rome, where he died in 1994. Boetti's early works from the 1960s were largely object-oriented and fitted well within the realms of the Arte Povera movement. However, his work became increasingly distinctive in its conceptuality. As duality was an important concept in his art, from 1968 he added an "e" (Italian for "and") between his first name and surname creating a double character which he used throughout his career.

Boetti travelled to Afghanistan for the first time in 1971 and visited the country regularly until 1979 when the Russian Army invaded the country. Amazed by the embroideries made by Afghan weavers, he commissioned them to produce large-scale works, including his famous *Mappe*, *Arazzi* and *Kilims*. The embroideries were initially designed in Italy, with the help of his assistants, and then fabricated in Afghanistan. However, after the Russian invasion in 1979 the production was moved to Pakistan. This enabled Boetti to integrate Middle Eastern culture and tradition into his works (often represented by Farsi writing), since he was very much interested in the principles of polar forces and harmonies and hence, bridging West and East.

Throughout his career, Boetti continued to work with a wide array of materials, tools, and techniques, including ballpoint pens (biro) and even the postal system. Boetti's *Biro* works are prominent within his oeuvre; the complex surface pattern is achieved through hundreds of thousands of biro marks, all laboriously applied by his friends and acquaintances.

The end result gives the impression of a complex and vibrating surface texture. As with Boetti's embroideries, language and communication is prevalent in his *Biro* works. Letters of the alphabet were often laid out to form an index on the left side of the paper. Boetti then assembled commas horizontally so that they corresponded to each letter of the alphabet. The work can be "read" from left to right by following the position of the commas in relation to the letters.

Alighiero Boetti is represented in numerous important public and private collections worldwide. In January 2013 a solo exhibition of Boetti's work opened at Rome's MAXXI Foundation; in celebration of the artist and in conjunction with the exhibition, the City of Rome officially dedicated the MAXXI piazza to Boetti. A major Boetti retrospective was recently organised by Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), Tate Modern (London) and MoMA (New York) and toured the three museums between 2011 and 2012. Other important travelling exhibitions of his work have been organised in 1993-94 by Le Magasin (Grenoble), MoCA (Los Angeles) and PS1 (New York); in 1997 by Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (Turin), Musée d'Art Moderne (Villeneuve-d'Ascq) and Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (Vienna) and in 2004 by GAMeC (Bergamo) and Fundación Proa (Buenos Aires). Other important retrospectives include the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1999 and Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 2003.

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