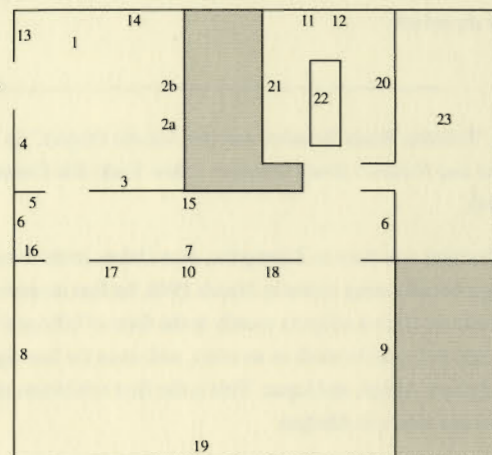


Site Map



**Alighiero e Boetti**

1. *Iter-vallo*, 1969. Iron and tissue paper, 37 x 37 inches. Collection Agata Boetti, Paris.
- 2a. *I mille fiumi più lunghi del mondo (The Thousand Longest Rivers in the World)*, 1977–85. Embroidery on canvas, 99 x 211 inches. Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Ronald S. Lauder and Purchase, 1993.
- 2b. *I mille fiumi più lunghi del mondo*, 1977. Book, 8½ x 6¾ inches. Edition no. 373/500.
3. *Faccine colorate (Colored Faces)*, 1979. Felt-tipped pen on printed paper on canvas, six panels, each 39½ x 27½ inches. Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.
4. *Mettere il mondo al mondo (Putting*

- the World into the World)*, 1972/73. Ballpoint on paper on canvas, 2 panels, each 59 x 98½ inches. Courtesy Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome.
5. *Numeri da uno a dieci (Numbers from One to Ten)*, 1980. Watercolor on paper, ten panels, each 11¾ x 15¾ inches. Collection Caterina Boetti, Rome.
6. *Ordine e disordine (Order and Disorder)*, English version, 1986. Embroidery on canvas, 199 pieces, each 9½ x 9½ inches. Courtesy Gallery Eric Franck, Geneva.
7. *Anno 1990 (The Year 1990)*, 1990. Pencil on paper on canvas, twelve panels, each 39¼ x 39¼ inches. Collection Caterina Boetti, Rome.
8. *Mappa (Map)*, 1971/89. Embroidery on canvas, 118 x 236¼ inches. Collection Caterina Boetti, Rome.

9. *Mappa (Map)*, 1993–94. Embroidery on canvas, 118 x 236¼ inches. Collection Caterina Boetti, Rome.
10. *Tutto (Everything)*, 1991–92. Embroidery on canvas, 83¾ x 163¾ inches. Collection Anne-Marie Sauzeau, Rome.
11. *Regno Animale (Animal Kingdom)*, 1977. Pencil on paper, 59 x 39¼ inches. Collection Anne-Marie Sauzeau, Rome.
12. *Regno Musicale (Musical Kingdom)*, 1978. Pencil on paper, 59 x 39¼ inches. Collection Anne-Marie Sauzeau, Rome.
17. *Relevés des signes observés sur noix de cola (Readings from Signs Observed on Cola Nuts)*, 1981–94. 55 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches.
18. *Relevés des signes observés sur oranges (Readings from Signs Observed on Oranges)*, 1988. 36 panels, each 6 x 3¾ inches.
19. *Alphabet Bété (Bété Alphabet)*, 1990–91. 449 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches or 6 x 3¾ inches.
20. *Zacrô Zépè*, 1990. 51 panels, each 12½ x 6½ or 6½ x 12½ inches.
21. *Semence de la vie (Seed of Life)*, 1977. 23 panels, each 12¼ x 8¾ inches or 8¾ x 12¼ inches.
22. *Poids Akan à peser l'or (Akan Weights for Weighing Gold)*, 1989–90. 36 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches or 3¾ x 6 inches.

**Frédéric Bruly Bouabré**

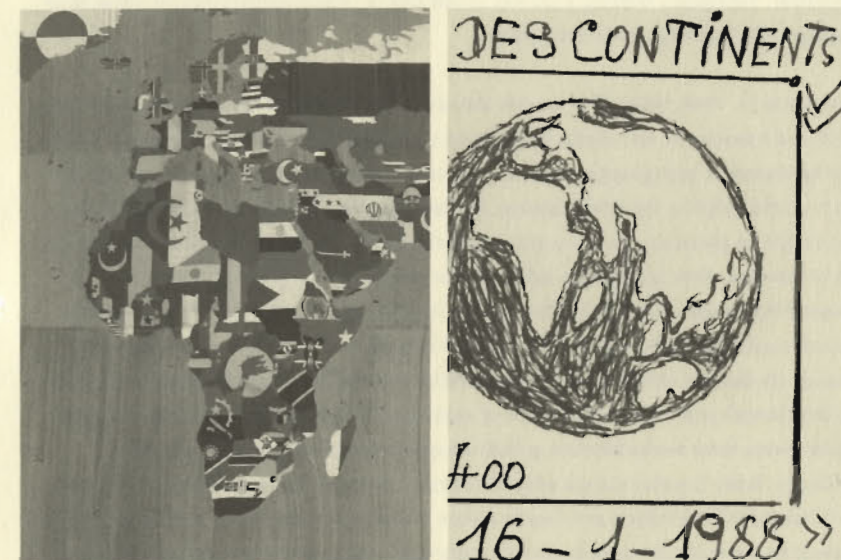
13. *Etoiles de mes rêves (Stars from My Dreams)*, 1989. 8 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches.
14. *Le Musée du visage africain (Scarifications) (The Museum of the African Face [Scarifications])*, second version, 1991–92. 112 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches or 6 x 3¾ inches.
15. *Connaissance du monde (Knowledge of the World)*, 1982–94. 195 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches or 6 x 3¾ inches.
16. *Les Chiffres de la comptabilité (Numbers for Accounting)*, 1989–90. 9 panels, each 3¾ x 6 inches.
23. Books by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré. Collection of the artist.

The initial proposal for this exhibition was made by André Magnin. The exhibition was cocurated by Lynne Cooke, Dia Center for the Arts, and André Magnin, independent curator based in Paris and curator of the C.A.A.C., Geneva. The brochure text was written by Lynne Cooke.

Major funding for this exhibition has been received from the Lannan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, Washington, D.C. Additional funding was provided by the members of the Dia Art Council, the major annual support group of Dia Center for the Arts, and the Dia Art Circle.

**ALIGHIERO E BOETTI  
FRÉDÉRIC BRULY BOUABRÉ**

Worlds Envisioned



left: detail of *Mappa (Map)*, 1993–94. Photo: Cathy Carver.  
right: detail of *Untitled*, 1988. Photo: Claude Postel, © C.A.A.C. 1994 Jean Pigozzi Collection.

October 6, 1994–June 25, 1995

548 West 22nd Street, New York City

## ALIGHIERO E BOETTI FRÉDÉRIC BRULY BOUABRÉ

### *Worlds Envisioned*

"Worlds Envisioned" brings into dialogue the works of Italian artist Alighiero e Boetti and Ivorian Frédéric Bruly Bouabré. Selected in consultation with the artists, the works in this exhibition highlight certain affinities and congruences that inform their art notwithstanding their very different cultural backgrounds. Both may be described as cosmographers, individuals with an encyclopedic curiosity about the world, and a fascination with the systems, codes and schemata by which such knowledge is recorded, archived, coded and classified. Yet equally binding is the wry, ironic fantasy which enables them to imbue their findings with beguiling poetic resonance.

On March 11, 1948, Bruly Bouabré was the subject of a vision that persuaded him to seek to fix and transmit the knowledge of his people, the Bété, and of the world at large. To that end he invented a pictographic alphabet with some 440 characters in order to provide the first written script for the Bété language. He then began writing books in which he both developed his philosophy and sought to set down the lore, traditions, and knowledge of his native peoples. After acting as an informant for some years to French ethnographers researching his and other West African tribes, he determined in the late 1970s to become an artist and continue his mission. He adopted a format for his work at once simple and immensely flexible: visual images surrounded by a textual border are inscribed in pen and colored pencils onto small tablets made of cardboard. Grouped together in ongoing, open-ended series, these works function as both informal archives and poetic expressions. Tellingly, Bruly Bouabré did not adopt Western art forms as they have been and continue to be taught in West Africa, nor does he follow traditional or indigenous models and styles. Instead he has evolved a manner of outline drawing, which distills and abstracts motifs to basic forms in iconic compositions.

With his omnivorous curiosity and unshakable belief that the world is decipherable, Bruly Bouabré responds to everything he encounters, major and minor, visible and invisible, as "signs of a cosmic harmony set in motion by the creator." He has therefore adopted a plethora of roles—mystic, divinator, poet, moralist, storyteller, humanist, ethnologist, sociologist, and political commentator, amongst others. *Connaissance du monde* (*Knowledge of the World*) forms the thematic focus of one great group of his drawings; an alphabet, the basic linguistic tool, that of another; and numbers, as enumerated on the fingers in one of the oldest and most universal of systems, yet another. A classification of systems of mensuration, as found in Akan weights, of sexual practices (among animals and humans alike), and of patterns of kinship as revealed in the practice of scarification, constitute the sources for yet others. While based at times on the practices of his people, the Bété, these works are not in any narrow sense confined to them. For as anthropologist

and art historian Yaya Savané argues: "The existence of a universal kinship, the unity of the world, and the necessity of cultural crossbreeding constitute the foundation of the artistic project Frédéric Bruly Bouabré holds dear."<sup>1</sup> Thus, kinship, together with the possibility of initiating or affirming familial relationships operates for Bruly Bouabré irrespective of geographical, cultural, and anthropological belonging, just as certain visual languages may communicate beyond the boundaries of specific times and places.

If in the mid-sixties his first works as a mature artist linked him to the burgeoning Arte Povera movement in Italy, Alighiero Boetti soon displayed a fascination with conceptual systems and with rational, and nonrational intellectual structures, which rapidly infused his work with a singular tenor. In 1968 in a celebrated gesture he created, via a postcard, a duplicate image of himself, a double whose hand clasped his in a gesture of unity: this twinning was reinforced by the simultaneous change of his name to Alighiero e Boetti, Alighiero and Boetti. Duplication, the extension of the self beyond the singular; the desire to divert the focus away from the artist as a unique individual toward a more open-ended practice that constantly sought the hands of others as its conduit, its means of realizing its conceptions and insights; are fundamental tenets of Boetti's vision. In a related manner, certain forms of preexisting information—maps of the world, proverbs and idioms, number systems, taxonomies and international news, have been mined as raw material.

Just prior to his death in April 1994, Boetti spoke again of a project to write a history of the world for the use of children in every country. A humanist by inclination, he was by temperament too ironic, and too anarchic to be an idealist. If a certain history of our times may be read through the dispassionately presented compendium of miscellaneous magazine covers taken from a single year, *Anno 1990* is nevertheless a record of the momentous and the trivial, the ephemeral and the durable, the profound and the insignificant, presented indiscriminately, without hierarchy or preferentiality. Likewise, the task of determining the thousand longest rivers of the world, as with any analogous type of scientific enquiry, taxonomy and classification, proves far from easily determinable: the information is rarely decisive, fixed, and unassailable; just as within order there is always disorder, yet disorder too always conceals its antithesis. It is not incidental that the grid, a kind of game board, is both a structural determinant and a recurrent image in Boetti's art. With its checkered structure, composed of hard and soft, ephemeral and durable, light and heavy, assembled in the most simple yet demanding exercise of agility, *Iter-vallo* is a quintessential Boetti work. Devotee of arcane, recondite knowledge as well as of the obvious, the immediate, and the quotidian, Boetti sought to embrace all. The brilliant amorcellated field of writhing shapes, fluctuating and unfixable, provisional and yet

inclusive, and ultimately unknowable of *Tutto* (*Everything*) offers a suggestive counterpoint to *Connaissance du monde*.

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1. Yaya Savané, "Frédéric Bruly Bouabré and His Artistic Project," in *Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré*, (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, forthcoming 1994).

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré was born in Zépréguhe, near Dalou, in the Ivory Coast in 1921. After undergoing a transforming vision in March 1948, he first invented an alphabet then began writing books on diverse subjects mostly in the form of bilingual French/Bété texts. In the late seventies, he began to work as an artist, and since the late eighties, has exhibited his drawings in Europe, Africa, and Japan. This is the first exhibition of his works in North America. He lives and works in Abidjan.

Alighiero e Boetti was born in Turin in December, 1940, and died in Rome in April, 1994. He exhibited widely in Italy and beyond from the late sixties and was the subject of a retrospective in 1992 that traveled to Bonn and Münster, Germany, and Lucerne, Switzerland. His works can be found in major museums and galleries throughout the world.

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