

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Plagens, Peter, "The Mind Games Artists Play – Alighiero Boetti: Game Plan," *Wall Street Journal*, August 31, 2011.

## The Mind Games Artists Play

*Alighiero Boetti: Game Plan*

**Museum of Modern Art**

**Through Oct. 1**

By **PETER PLAGENS**

In his late 20s, the Italian artist Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994) "twinned" himself and henceforth signed his work "Alighiero e Boetti." He even concocted an altered photograph of his handsome self as two hand-holding lookalikes. But the gimmick ran deeper than just a way to cut himself out from the pack of fellow artists in Arte Povera, Italy's deliberately junky and best-known contribution to the parade of styles in post-World War II art. He was genuinely concerned—obsessed is a better word—with the way the world is both ordered and efficient and disordered and inefficient. Mr. Boetti prized inefficiency as a rebellion against what he presciently saw as the coming mechanization of human beings. He even made himself draw with his off hand (his left) to make it more difficult to crank out art.

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Alighiero Boetti's 'Autoritratto (Self-Portrait)' (1993)  
Estate of Alighiero Boetti / Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York / SIAE, Rome

Mr. Boetti's work understandably took highly variegated forms, from monochrome panels bearing in raised letters the name of the color of industrial paint employed in their making, to commissioned tapestries of world maps in which individual countries are colored with fragments of their own flags. He bundled and stacked and sculpted (like a kid, arranging almost-comic clay balls into a "portrait" of himself lying supine, getting a tan). One of Mr. Boetti's last works is another self-portrait: a life-size bronze figure of himself in a suit, holding a garden hose that literally sprays water onto his head, as if to cool his overheated mind. This show, filled with visual puns and conceptual contradictions, is also strangely beautiful as a whole, leaving you feeling oddly uplifted.