

Boetti by Afghan People

Peshawar, Pakistan, 1990

Photographs by Randi Malkin Steinberger

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In ***Boetti by Afghan People: Peshawar, Pakistan, 1990***, American photographer Randi Malkin Steinberger offers an intimate portrait of the production of Italian conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti's pivotal embroidered works by Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Steinberger's photographs document the previously unseen story behind the making of some of Boetti's (1940-1994) most iconic and monumental works, consisting of embroidered pieces of all sizes, and wall-sized world maps incorporating the colors and symbols of each country's flag.

In 1990, Steinberger traveled to Peshawar, Pakistan, with Boetti's blessing to document the process of the making of his embroideries. Due to Islamic cultural traditions, Boetti himself could not visit the women in their homes, where the embroidery was made. Steinberger, traveling with a Boetti assistant, was given unprecedented access to follow "the journey of these cloths" from the shop of the antique dealers who served as middlemen into the craftswomen's workrooms as they brought color and life to these spectacular works. When Steinberger returned to Rome, she and Boetti together selected 55 color photographs for a future book. Now, two decades after the photographs were taken, they are being published to tell the story for the first time in this beautiful, multi-layered and cloth-covered edition printed in Italy, becoming an historical document of this chapter of Boetti's oeuvre.

Boetti often said that he considered his art a way to communicate across the globe, and that the resulting works were owned as much by the women who realized the embroidery as by the artist himself. Now, their story is revealed and their work can be celebrated, adding a new dimension to Boetti's seminal works.

Boetti by Afghan People: Peshawar, Pakistan, 1990, includes essays in English and Italian by Steinberger, Boetti scholar Christopher G. Bennett, and longtime Boetti assistant Andrea Marescalchi, as well as a conversation between Steinberger and Rome-based gallerist, Alessandra Bonomo. The book serves as the companion to an upcoming Boetti exhibition organized by the prestigious Fowler Museum at University of California, Los Angeles, in association with Fondazione Azzurra, and complements a tightly focused exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art that features an iconic Boetti *Mappa*. Upcoming is also a major Boetti retrospective by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Tate Modern in London, and Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, opening in October 2011 and traveling through 2013.

Randi Malkin Steinberger is an American photographer and documentary filmmaker, whose work has been shown around the world over the past 25 years. A published author and curator, this marks her second collaboration with renowned artist Alighiero Boetti (*Accanto al Pantheon*, published by Prearo Editions in Milan). For more information, please visit <http://randimalkinsteinberger.com/>

Boetti by Afghan People is available at: <http://www.rampub.com/photography/978-0-9703860-9-0>

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