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Alighiero Boetti
Dama e quadretti
10 September – 20 November 2026

Larkin Erdmann Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition *Dama e quadretti* featuring Italian artist Alighiero Boetti. At its centre stand a group of *Dama* of 1967 and 1968, shown at the gallery for the first time. With them the gallery presents a selection of small embroidered squares (quadretti) made between 1977 and 1990.

The *Dama* are checkerboards of movable wooden blocks, each punched with a symbol so that they can be recomposed by pairing like with like, as in dominoes. Boetti was interested in dualities: order and disorder, the natural and the artificial. "I think everything contains its opposite," he said. "We always have to seek one in the other."

They date from his first years of work. Boetti (1940–1994) was then living in Turin, where he had his first solo exhibition at Galleria Christian Stein in January 1967. Later that year he took part in *Arte povera – Im spazio* in Genoa, the exhibition at which Germano Celant introduced the term. He soon disassociated himself from the movement. What stayed was the interest in rules and systems.

That interest took him abroad and turned towards the map. On 10 June 1967, the day the Six-Day War ended, Boetti traced the outline of the territories occupied by Israel from the newspaper *La Stampa*. Others followed. From 1971 he travelled to Afghanistan twice a year, and it was in Kabul that he began having his work embroidered by local women. Out of this came the *Mappa* series: hand-embroidered maps in which each country is filled with its own flag.

The small squares followed. The first, *Ordine e disordine*, was sewn in Kabul in September 1972 and measured some twenty centimetres. Boetti drew around 150 phrases whose letters could be set into a square; he fixed the words and left the colours to the embroiderers, so that no two versions are alike. Read as colour fields at first, they resolve on closer inspection into sentences and proverbs.

More than twenty years separate the *Dama* from the last of these embroideries, yet both rest on the same idea: a system set down by the artist, then deliberately left open.

***Dama e quadretti*, 10 September – 20 November 2026, Hirschengraben 3, 8001 Zurich.**