

MAXXI presents

## ALIGHIERO BOETTI IN ROME

### Boetti with Clemente and Ontani

30 works recounting a remarkable creative season

**MAXXI DEDICATES THE MUSEUM PIAZZA TO ALIGHIERO BOETTI:  
TUESDAY 22 JANUARY ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION  
MAXXI'S PRESIDENT GIOVANNA MELANDRI WILL UNVEIL THE PLAQUE**

**23 January – 6 October 2013**

[www.fondazionemaxxi.it](http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it)

*Rome, 22 January 2013.* An exhibition describing the relationship between an artist allergic to definitions and a city that became for him a jumping off point for the unknown and inspiration for new creative paths: with **Alighiero** Boetti in Rome produced by MAXXI Arte directed by Anna Mattiolo, MAXXI recounts the story of "*Ali Ghiero, the passing Bedhouin, camped out beside the Pantheon*".

Housed in the museum from **23 January to 6 October 2013**, the exhibition examines the particular relationship that tied Boetti to Rome, which he considered as an "outpost on the road to the East": how the capital's artistic community was influenced by him and how the relationships with his vision of the Orient were fundamental to the re-emergence of a new colouristic sensibility during the 1980s.

The exhibition underlines the connections, the intertwining and the resonances between the artist's oeuvre and those of **Francesco Clemente** and **Luigi Ontani**, a series of works by whom will dialogue with those of Boetti, investigating for the first time the relationships between their works, which redefine the panorama of creative vitality and exuberance that invested the generation of the 1970s.

**Thirty works**, many previously unseen or rarely exhibited, that recount an extraordinary creative season in search of an identity and exploring distant, enthralling worlds.

Tuesday 22 January, on the occasion of the inauguration of the exhibition, at 18.30 at MAXXI B.A.S.E. **Mark Godfrey, Franco La Cecla** and **Annemarie Sauzeau** moderated by **Elena Del Drago**, will be presenting the second volume of the **catalogue raisonné of Alighiero Boetti**, published by Electa.

Also on Tuesday 22 January at 19.30, the President of the Fondazione MAXXI, **Giovanna Melandri**, will be unveiling **the plaque officially dedicating the MAXXI piazza to the great Italian artist**. The proposal to dedicate the piazza to Boetti came about in 2010 through a survey launched by MAXXI and Massimiliano Tonelli, then director of Exibart.

"Alighiero Boetti is one of the fathers of Italian contemporary art;" says **Giovanna Melandri**, "still today his work is crammed with ideas for all young artists and MAXXI is paying him due tribute. A museum like MAXXI, projected towards the future, cannot afford to lose sight of the roots from which contemporary culture is born."

#### THE EXHIBITION

Boetti moved to Rome in the autumn of 1972. His companion Anne Marie Sauzeau wrote about this decision as follows: he had "*the illusion that Rome was already Palermo and Palermo was already Cairo*". Considered by the artist as an outpost on the road to the East, as opposed to the cold and conceptual aristocratic Turin, Rome offered him an unexpected creative freedom and opened up new and individual paths free of conditioning. The capital's artistic community was in search of an identity in the face of the masters of the previous generation such as Gastone Novelli, Achille Perilli, Toti Scialoja and Giulio Turcato and the generation revolving around the court of Mario Schifano, of whom Boetti became a close friend.

In a tribute to the imaginary geography Boetti created in his work, the exhibition opens with a piece by the English artist **Jonathan Monk**, *Untitled and Unfinished (Afghanistan)* (2004): a fixed viewpoint film of the Band-e Amir lakes, a magical and surreal place in north-central Afghanistan where Boetti wanted his ashes to be scattered.

The political situation in the country means that the lakes are still an inaccessible place that we can only imagine, as Monk himself did when he commissioned an Afghan to shoot the film, much in the same way as for years the embroiders created Boetti's maps.

**The works by Boetti** on show in the exhibition testify to the definitive closure of the Turinese Arte Povera period with a kind of rebirth of colour, lightness and experimentation.

In the 1970s, Boetti began working on his *Maps* of which two examples will be on show, including **one that has never previously been exhibited**. His relationship with Rome led him to develop the theme of travel, understood both in physical and a metaphorical sense as the oscillation between techniques and cultural traditions, of which one example is the imposing work *Poems with Sufi Berang*, composed of 51 elements in which phrases by Boetti in the Roman alphabet alternate with poems in Farsi written for the piece by the Afghan Sufi Berang, whom he met and frequented assiduously in Peshawar.

For Boetti, Rome also signified the rediscovery of colour: *I discovered after the event that in Turin I never used colours. Perhaps I felt the rigour of the city too strongly... while here in Rome I've come to recognise the beauty of doing a lot, of working more quickly, of expanding, of facilitating.*

This thinking is reflected in works such as the *Faces* coloured together with his daughter Agata in 1977 and the large works on paper that extend to the point that they incorporated a Baroque universe of natural forms, objects that speak of the intimacy of his studio declined in fabulous colours. Further examples are the two works entitled *Prints*, which for this occasion have **joined the MAXXI collection thanks to a permanent loan by Matteo Boetti, the artist's son**: two works that take their title from the pattern of the soles of Boetti's shoes that traverse them vertically with the delicacy of an acrobat.

A disorderly Rome, experienced as *the last alchemical bastion*, freed from the trammels of political and conceptual ideology, welcomed **Francesco Clemente** at just 18 years of age in 1970.

His works in this exhibition, all from the second half of the 1970s, characterised by a linear and precise draughtsmanship, reveal an artist very different to the one of the Transavanguardia movement: they express a total intimacy with the Boettian poetic and the suggestion of an East sought even further East following the trip to Afghanistan undertaken with Boetti in '74.

Clemente was to be the only one of the three artists to leave Rome definitively, moving for long periods to India and studying theosophy in Madras where, after having settled in New York, he was to return on a number of occasions during the 1980s.

Another Rome again was experienced by **Luigi Ontani**, the city being described by the artist as one in which "personalities persist through mythology and legend".

He too used the city as a point of departure to his own East, which in the second half of the 1970s was to take the form of *Travels in India*, a wonderful project from which the first watercoloured photographs that portray him in his famous tableaux vivants are on show: an exotic, artificial and fantastic vision expressing the conceptual purity of one of the last Orientalists.

Also on show together with this work is the *Flying Carpet* in which the artist in photomontage recounts the ideal place of those of no fixed abode and those who feel that they in a state of perennial transit.

The East is therefore a choice of total immersion for Clemente, while for Ontani it is an imagined world constructed with the same attention he paid to fables and myths. Alighiero Boetti instead always wanted to be a westerner in Kabul and an oriental in Rome, underlining his deliberate alternation with respect to the state of things, his innate bilaterality: *"In Rome I am a foreigner, I am a visitor, hence I am always aware of where I am."*

The press pack and images of the exhibition may be downloaded from the reserved area of the Fondazione MAXXI site at [http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/?page\\_id=5176](http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/?page_id=5176) inserting the password **areariservatamaxxi**.

**MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts**

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**opening hours:** 11.00 – 19.00 (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday) | 11.00 – 22.00 (Saturday)

**closed:** Mondays, 1 May and 25 December | **tickets:** €11,00 adults, €8,00 reduced

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## ALIGHIERO BOETTI A ROMA

23 January - 6 October 2013

With this exhibition MAXXI is celebrating the addition to its collection of two works by Alighiero Boetti, the *Prints*, thanks to the generous loan by Matteo Boetti, son of the artist. Such a demonstration of trust on the part of collectors and heirs is for us a crucial goal as it confirms the museum's role as a point of reference for those gravitating around the art system; in this sense we would like to thank the Alighiero Boetti Archive and Foundation which, for many years, have been occupied in the study (resulting in the fundamental catalogue raisonné of which we are presenting the second volume today) and the promotion of the artist. Moreover, this acquisition is particularly important for us because it integrates our nucleus of works by Boetti: *Camouflage* (1968), rarely exhibited, one of the very first *Maps* (1971-73) and *Iter-vallo* (1969-1986), a version of the lost work exhibited at *Live in Your Head. When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969. We are, therefore, delighted to be able to enhance this nucleus with a work from Boetti's last years in which his entire research was condensed. The *Prints* are among the largest works on paper Boetti ever made, their surface filled with drawings taken from magazine covers, documents, exhibition invitations and postcards describing a private universe full of ideas that have never failed to influence the younger generations, becoming the object of their research, as in the case of the video by Jonathan Monk on show in the exhibition.

The exhibition takes its cue from artist's move to Rome, the city in which Alighiero Boetti found many fellow travellers, from among whom we have chosen to include in this show Francesco Clemente and Luigi Ontani who both moved to Rome in 1970. As outsiders they too experienced Rome as a bridge to the East, a port for distant imaginations that, at a time when the social situation in the country is increasingly suffocating, becomes a place in which to find comfort. The Rome of those years corresponds with their vision of the Orient: a place experienced first hand and, at the same time, constructed and imagined and in which we are still immersed.

The exhibition is, therefore, a due tribute to an artist who proved capable of constructing a legend in his turn and it is not simply a "happy coincidence", to use an expression dear to the artist, if the museum has decided to officially dedicate its piazza to him.

Anna Mattiolo, *Director MAXXI Arte*

## ALIGHIERO BOETTI A ROMA

23 January - 6 October 2013

### ALIGHIERO BOETTI

#### **Mimetico**, 1968

Military camouflage fabric on wood boards assembled on painted chipboard support  
Permanent Collection

In 1966 Alighiero Boetti began experimenting with industrial materials, utilised for their intrinsic qualities. Camouflage fabrics exploit a mechanism of imitating reality: natural colours are employed not to represent reality, common in the work of art, but instead to dissimulate it within the piece. In this rare example of an assembly of different camouflage fabrics, shown in Genoa at the Galleria de' Foscherari as part of the 1968 exhibition *Arte Povera*, Boetti combines diverse patterns of camouflage to create a contemporary polyptych. Mimesis is assumed as a metaphor of invisibility and reveals nothing other than its blatantly industrial nature. This early research by Boetti highlights the formal partiality of colour, revealing the nature of visual conventions.

#### **Rosso Palermo 511 52 27**, 1967

Industrial paint on metal  
Campiani di Cellatica Collection

When Boetti began working with the so-called panels "of colours" he was undoubtedly also influenced by the presence in Turin of FIAT, the Italian automobile manufacturer that so strongly contributed to defining the city's identity. In the Panels, colour is presented not as an industrial product as with the camouflage pieces, but in its pre-commercial nature, with the code and name that identifies it. The title *Rosso Palermo*, visible on the surface of the work, corresponds exactly with the name of the colour, eliminating any need for interpretation. Even the method of applying the paint by "spraying" is a reference to the techniques of painting car bodies, while the reference to a site evocative of vibrant colour, in this case the city of "Palermo" reinforces the promotional function of the product's commercial name.

#### **Mappa**, 1984

Embroidery on fabric  
Collection of Matteo Boetti, Rome

#### **Mappa**, 1971-73

Embroidery on linen Permanent Collection

Begun in 1971, during his first trip to Afghanistan, the work of the *Mappe* would accompany Boetti throughout his life. The maps were planned and designed on canvas in Rome, which were then shipped to Afghanistan to be embroidered; this was the case until the late 1970s, after which the Russian invasion made it increasingly more difficult to effect shipments and organise the work. In the mid-1980s the *Mappe* were entrusted to Afghan refugees who had fled to Peshawar, in Pakistan. Within the rigid conceptual panorama of the early 1970s, the palette of brilliant colours comprising the flags was a source of embarrassment, and early critical reactions were anything but positive: for the most part due to the artisanal component of the works, embroidered by groups of women following a pre-established pattern. If, at first glance, the pieces appear to be the result of indifferent labour, in the two *Mappe* on display it is possible to observe that the official flag of Afghanistan, in the more recent of the two, was substituted by the embroiderers with a word woven in red on a white field. The Latin transcription of this word is "Khalq", the name of the reformist party that had come to power.

#### **Faccine**, 1977

Hand drawing on offset poster printed in black & white  
Collection of Agata Boetti, Paris

This work was realised in 1977 together with Boetti's daughter Agata, at the time five years of age. The use of offset printing in lieu of the freer use of the marker refers to a process of maximum serialization, a

condition common to Italy during this period. The work reveals the search for a harmony between standardisation and uniqueness, similar to the *Mappe*: for the most part identical, though always different depending upon by who and when they were realised. Even the ironic allusion in the title (*faccine* = little faces) underlines the possibility of playing with only a few signs to change the conventional expression of a face, whose hexagonal perimeter is repeated in exact copies in a continuous dialectic between “order and disorder”, one of the artist’s favourite expressions.

### **Clessidra, cerniera e viceversa, 1981**

Pencil on paper

Grasso Cannizzo Collection, Vittoria

The notion of dualism is one of the constants in Boetti’s research and biography: in 1972 he began to sign his works “Alighiero e Boetti”. Between the 1970s and ‘80s he experienced a moment of profound change and dismay, evident in *Clessidra, cerniera e viceversa*. Realised by ripping a handwritten text from the centre and folding the page in four flaps, the work is presented from behind, with the four directions of text inverted and difficult to read. The text appears to come from a private diary and to describe complex situations, reflected in the difficulty of deciphering them, the expression of some irreparable laceration that coincides with the condition of the paper on which it is written.

### **Sentire una pietra di notte spaccarsi in due, 1982**

Mixed media on paper

Collection of Alessandra Bonomo, Rome

Boetti realised this piece in 1982 during a period of convalescence following an automobile accident that forced him to remain immobile. The title, which runs in pencil along the right edge of the paper, refers to a capacity for perception taken to the extreme, in this case hearing, which resounds in the word “vedenti” (the seeing), created by perforating the paper at the base of the work. At the centre is a vertical axis that recalls a spinal column drawn with a large and full pen stroke that begins, precisely at this time, to be present in some of Boetti’s work, together with animal motifs. In this work, dolphins were selected for their ultrasensitive capacities and for the flexibility of their bodies, experienced by Boetti during this period as a debilitating limit.

### **Senza titolo (Renè Guenon), 1987**

Mixed media on paper laid on canvas

Collection of Alessandra Bonomo, Rome

During the course of the 1980s, Boetti’s visual universe was populated with animal figures – frogs, dolphins, primates – that, perhaps for the first time, became such a powerful part of a work of artistic research. The primates, repeated like the elements of some infinite decorative project, are often depicted in their habitual movements. In this work this animal’s typical leap from one branch to the next is re-examined, substituting the form of the branch with a swathe of colour. The animal thus finds itself moving within the work, tying the entire composition together in its leaps and bounds. In 1926, the esoteric René Guénon, the inspiration for the title, wrote: “from one order to another, all things are linked and matched together so that they cooperate towards the universal and total harmony”.

### **Senza titolo, 1987**

Mixed media on paper laid on canvas

Collection of Alessandra Bonomo, Rome

In 1987 Boetti began realising large works comprised of multiple panels that, presented horizontally, recall a frieze. The lower part features running primates, while above are intimate and familiar images inspired by objects in the artist’s studio, such as drawings, postcards and newspaper and magazine clippings. Like many works from the following years, Boetti employed a stamp that was reused many times, in a sort of creative fury. Speaking about these works he would say: “the most important thing that also becomes speed is the definition of a form”. Beginning with a catalogue of forms, it is possible to create diverse orders, as is the nature of the universe, composed of single elements repeated in infinite combinations.

### **Poesie con il Sufi Berang, 1989**

Embroidery on fabric  
Private Collection, Rome

Beginning in 1988, large squares of letters, alternating between the Farsi and Latin alphabets, were embroidered by Afghan refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan. The piece on display was realised in 1989 in occasion of the large exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, presented at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. It featured works from all continents and different artistic cultures according to a postmodern idea of contamination. The verses embroidered on the canvases were composed by the Sufi master Berang for the occasion; Boetti, interested in Sufi poetry since the mid-1970s, met Berang in Peshawar in the mid-1980s. A close tie was born between the two, and it was precisely the Sufi master who celebrated Boetti's second marriage to Caterina Raganelli, already joined in a civil service. The fifty-one elements that compose this piece, one of the most impressive examples of the Boetti's research, are presented here for the first time in Italy. The visual component is fundamental to this work. It resides in the integration between two languages: a true and proper language and culture, where the use of Farsi is intended to represent all Sufi culture. The observer is invited to read the text in Italian, though is unable to decipher that in Farsi; the lyrical component, given the impossibility of comprehending the poetic value of the text, resides in the sign that is already a poem on its own.

### **Tutto, 1989**

Embroidery on cotton  
Private Collection, Rome

The genesis of this work dates back to the beginning of Boetti's development as an artist when, in 1968, he exhibited *Pack* in Milan at the Galleria Christian Stein. The piece was a thin strip of concrete crisscrossed by cracks that, seen from above, recalls the ice pack at the two Poles. The work was lost, though Boetti would continue to use the title, alongside a second one *Perdita di identità* and later *Tutto*, in experiments with framing letters that he continued throughout the 1970s. The three titles, one after the other, lead to a reflection on the significance given to this work by Boetti: the pieces of the pack come together to form a recognisable image, though only at the cost of losing their individual identity. These reflections became more concrete in the definitive form of the large embroidered words entitled "Tutto" (all/everything) begun some time around 1987, in which Boetti brought together any object, figure, image, memory, to compose a mosaic of overlapping forms that the eye is never fully able to identify.

### **Fregio, 1990**

Mixed media on paper laid on canvas  
Private Collection, Rome

*Fregio* was shown for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 1990: composed of twentyeight pieces, it ran along the walls of the room dedicated to Boetti. Ten other works were shown beneath *Fregio*, including *Orme I*. The compositional marvel of this work lies in the invention of animals that run from one element to the next, analogous to the phrase that ties them together. Fish, frogs and lizards are all inserted, similar to a classical frieze, within two parallel bands. The inscription above, as if celebrating feats or victories and echoing ancient stylemes, is instead a reflection on the work itself, composed of "traces and imprints and signals" designed to "fill this white and senseless race that is our lives".

### **Orme I, 1990**

### **Orme II, 1990 circa**

Mixed media on paper  
Permanent Collection On permanent loan from the Collection of Matteo Boetti, Rome

The *Orme* are among the largest works ever realised on paper by Boetti: they illustrate and conserve the themes of his research from previous decades. Their surfaces are covered by drawings of magazine covers, documents, invitations to exhibitions and postcards. Inside the forms outlined in pencil are coloured areas realised using paint that has been sprayed-on and colours left to drip or imprinted on the surface of the canvas using elastic bands dipped in paint to create irregular circumferences. *Orme I* was

exposed at the 1990 Venice Biennale and, among the documents represented, it is possible to recognise the invitation letter sent to the artist. *Orme II* was realised successively. In both, the disorder of the forms follows the central rhythm of the drawing marked by the soles of Boetti's shoes that, like those of an acrobat, cross the work vertically. Realised horizontally on the floor of his studio, the works conserve the memory of that gesture and, ironically, accompany the artist's final steps in an ascending movement.

**Senza Titolo, 1993-95**

Carpet in wool and cotton

Private Collection, Rome

**Senza Titolo, 1993-95**

Carpet in wool and cotton

Collection of Matteo Boetti, Rome

In Boetti's intentions, the Tappeti, conceived in 1993 and completed after his death, were to have reassumed the entirety of his iconography, becoming a sort of testament: it is typical of Islamic culture that the carpet serves as an abstract representation of the universe. Conceived as classical Persian rugs, in these pieces it is possible to retrace a critical observation of Boetti's entire oeuvre. The bands delimiting the perimeter contain the decorative elements so dear to the artist. There is a return of the motif of the spinal column that regulates the composition, as in the *Orme* and *Sentire una pietra di notte spaccarsi in due*, from which diverse forms depart and double, among which it is possible to recognise direct references to Boetti's other pieces: the *Tutto*, the framing of his name, the Afghan flag. A typical "do not disturb sign" from a hotel door is used here as a shape containing melancholic phrases that suggest the sentiment of intimacy that marked the artist's final days.

**Iter-vallo, 1969-1986**

Steel, trace paper

Permanent Collection

The title of this piece refers to the concept underlying the work itself: the act of repetition concealed within the Latin word "Iter" that, proceeding by regular "intervals", defines a geometric structure. The first version of this work was exhibited in Bern in 1969, in occasion of *When Attitudes Become Form*, the show that launched the concept of post-minimalist conceptualism in Europe. At first glance, *Iter-vallo* may be read as an expression of the minimalist current, with its regular multiplication of a basic industrial form, in this case a steel square. Within the apparent coldness of the work, the insertion of the trace paper insinuates the human component of the gesture, while the subtle imperfections of the paper, conserving the memory of the vegetal world, oppose the weightiness of the steel.

**La natura è una faccenda ottusa, 1981**

Mixed media on paper

Collection of Marina Deserti, Bologna

"Nature is a misplaced concreteness, an obtuse story, without sounds, perfumes, colours; merely a race run by matter, without end, without sense". This phrase by the British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead inspired a series of works by Boetti realised after 1980, in which the artist repeated the same compositional scheme, known as *Tra sé e sé* (between one and oneself), in each case re-modulating a universe of different natural forms at the centre of the work. The aerial view, with the profile of the artist's head limiting the upper and lower edges, employs a specular approach, inscribing it within a precise area, to emphasise the proliferation of animal forms presented in disordered chaos. As Boetti wrote, it is only "the human mind that seeks to capture (in nature) colours, perfumes, beauty".

**La quinta essenza del sesto senso, 1993**

Mixed media on paper laid on canvas

Calabresi Collection, Rome

A vertical element runs through the centre of the composition of *La quinta essenza del sesto senso*, dividing the pages of which the work is comprised into two distinct parts. The horizontal lines were realised by resting a support against the surface and tracing a line of colour along its edge. Together with the vertical rhythm, they work to form a compositional grid that supports the graft of images comprising the central spine: faithful reproductions of illustrations from magazines and journals. These elements “date” the piece and place it within a precise time: the passage of time exposes the process of historicisation through the reading of the elements that can be observed, not only in the events depicted, but also in the style of the illustrations.

## LUIGI ONTANI

### **Tappeto volante aureo, 1975**

Photographic print on paper Martino Collection, Rome

### **En route vers l'Inde, d'après Pierre Loti**

### **Stilita MahARAJa Monkey Mime AltoMARE, 1977**

Photographic prints treated with watercolour on paper Collection of the artist

### **Krishna, 1978**

Photographic prints treated with watercolour on paper

Private Collection

### **Le Temple, 1978**

Photographic print treated with watercolour on paper

Calabresi Collection, Rome

In the wake of his first trip to India in 1975, Ontani completed a series of works, some on display here. Part of his first Indian cycle *En route vers l'Inde*, they are an homage to the great traveller Pierre Loti and evidence of a highly idealised relationship with India. As Ontani wrote: “I felt the need to travel somewhere that felt like somewhere else”. He sought a possibility of illusion using photomontage, here in *Le Temple* and *AltoMARE*, that continued in a voyage, both metaphorical and real, already begun with the artifice of *Tappeto volante* in 1975. Ontani's development also passed through techniques and traditions: in Madras he discovered the Western use of watercolour and photography and, dressing the part of both Christ and Krishna, composed an ideal bridge between Western and Eastern iconography.

## FRANCESCO CLEMENTE

### **Coppie al lavoro, 1978**

Watercolour on paper laid on canvas

Private Collection

Francesco Clemente's early work immediately revealed the characteristics of what would prove to be one of the nodal points of his research: freeing space from the page, the canvas, from any spatial or perspectival convention. Figures thus seem to float in a liberated creative universe where they are arranged in a random order. During this period Clemente often examined the theme of the double using couples of binary figures presented in various forms: also a constant theme in the research of Alighiero Boetti. In this case the couple consists of two partners, apparently echoing an iconography of scenes of affection; however, upon careful observation it is clear that the figures are at work, and not entwined in amorous acts.

### **Under the Hat, 1978**

Watercolour on paper

D'Ercole Collection, Rome

This work offers evidence of how Clemente, after living in Madras from 1976 to 1977, fully developed the decorative approach he had begun to examine in Rome in early 1970s, fascinated by the ornamentation of friezes and classical grotesques, thus annulling any personal traits. The work depicts a modern Western bourgeois assuming the shifting forms of an Indian deity; it recalls the impersonal style of traditional oriental portraits that saw creativity as the simple expression of a desire for representation and

the search for anonymity as a sign of the skill of the painter-author. These themes, while modified by Clemente's personal experiences in India, are undoubtedly borrow.

**Ritratto di Foucault, 1978**

Gouache and pencil on paper laid on canvas

Gian Enzo Sperone Collection, New York

An homage to the French philosopher, this piece depicts the fixed repetition of the form of Michel Foucault's arm, borrowed from the portrait at the centre of the composition. Clemente substituted the great thinker's head, held by the arm in the typical gesture of reflection, with a series of classical architectural structures from different cultures. They resemble the notes of a personal travel diary, emblems of the nomadism that would soon become typical of Clemente's artistic personality. At the same time, the reference to Foucault appears to echo his notion of the impossibility of defining the individual subject, if not through the historical and social processes that led man to constitute himself also through his artistic expression.