

Mario García Torres

(Monclova, Mexico, 1975)

When Alighiero Boetti went to Afghanistan for the first time in 1971 to start the production of his hand-embroidered *Mappe*, Mario García Torres had not even been born. Only many years later would he find out about the fascination of the Turinese artist for that faraway land and his adventures there from a the owner of a hotel: the legendary One Hotel in Kabul. Boetti's legacy is thus explored through a major set of works produced over a period of eight years, between 2004 and 2012. These include photographs, videos, sculptures, postal and wall-mounted works which, as always in García Torres's production, are poised between the truth of documentary research and the irony of artistic fiction. While *Tiro di grazia con taglio di capelli alla Alighiero Boetti (Como)* (2004) triggers a game of identity-doubling thanks to the identification of a similar hairstyle adopted by the two men at different moments in time, *Today (News from Kabul)* (2006) strengthens their bond through the re-enactment of a 1970 action in which Boetti wrote on the wall in mirror fashion, using both hands.

Nevertheless, the main homage is entrusted to the works that retrace the activity of the One Hotel. For example, García Torres created a fictitious correspondence with Boetti in order to inform him of his desire to produce a film on the hotel, backdating his faxes to autumn 2001, in the weeks following the 11 September attack and some seven years after the death of the artist (*Share-e-Nau Wanderings. A Film Treatment*, 2006). Or, without the chance to go to Afghanistan during the most acute phase of the conflict, he was forced to carry out his research from a distance, gathering information from the web, accessing photographs of Kabul in the 1970s and the tales of those who knew and worked with Boetti (*¿Alguna vez has visto la nieve caer?*, 2010). At last, in 2012 the opportunity to visit the place where the hotel stood was provided by Documenta in Kassel, of which that edition was also held in Kabul and various other cities around the world. Some thirty years later, García Torres managed to take on the role of the manager of the One Hotel, thus completing the process of identification with his double. The documentary *TEA 1391 (Afghanistan/Mexico)* (2012) is a testimony of the journey that he undertook to restore the traditional social function of the hotel through the conviviality of the tea-drinking ritual, which brings together different times, distant countries and people.

Boetti is not the only figure who has been placed under the investigatory lens of García Torres, who belongs to that generation born in the 1970 that took up the legacy of conceptual art and reappraised it with a softer and carelessly appropriationist approach. His particular interest in the lesser-known stories of art has led him to reappraise episodes linked to figures such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, John Baldessari, Martin Kippenberger and many others.

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