



10 April 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

We appreciate your response to this matter, and believe that now, with continued, open dialogue, and of course, greater action, this issue could soon be settled.

Indeed, we contacted your company through Facebook on 04/04/19. However, we also contacted your public relations office on 02/04/19 (PRoffice@maxmara.it) and your main info address (info@maxmarafashiongroup.com) and your PR office, once again, on 03/04/19. We felt that multiple messages to different contacts at your company over the span of a full week was sufficient to warrant a timely response. In the end, it seems that response only came as a result of public pressure.

As a well-known and well-respected company, we are surprised to learn that your team did not perform any due diligence upon receiving the “vintage fabric” that is clearly ethnic in origin. I’m sure that your company agrees that just because you have a piece of fabric in your possession, that does not make it “public domain.” Undoubtedly, a Hermes scarf from the 1960s does not become public domain simply because it sits on your designer’s shelf. The Oma people are a very small minority group, with only about 2,000 people in Laos, so we do not expect that your corporate headquarters would recognize their incredibly distinct patterns. However, not knowing a textile’s origin does not give you the right to use it.

And, of course, there is no significant “elaboration” to your pattern, as you assert. The patterns used are undeniably a direct copy of authentic, traditional dress of the Oma people made and worn in the present day. This is abundantly clear particularly because after scanning and printing their designs on fabric, your team stitched on pom-poms (as the Oma do), in an attempt to mimic the original piece and preserve some of what it made it special — the hours of hand-crafting, the generations of traditional practice, and the cultural significance. Instead, you have diluted all of this to a print on fabric, with Max Mara on the label.

We understand you are concerned about damaging your reputation, and fully agree that your choice to use these designs without permission is doing that. You have the power to fix this quickly and responsibly, by pulling this line from your stores and online shop, and issuing a public statement acknowledging the mistake and a commitment to not make the same one again. Your donation to an organization that protects the rights of ethnic artisans will show the public that this was unintentional and that you truly “reserve the deepest attention and the most absolute respect for the rights belonging to third parties.”

We look forward to your response. Thank you very much.

Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre
Luang Prabang, Laos