



TRADITIONAL ARTS
& ETHNOLOGY CENTRE

22 April 2019

To: Luigi Maramotti, Chairman of Max Mara
From: Tara Gujadhur, Co-Director of the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre

Dear Mr. Maramotti,

On 2 April 2019, the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC) discovered that items in the SS19 Weekend Max Mara clothing line featured designs of the Oma ethnic group from northern Laos, but were being sold without acknowledgement of their origin. Since then, TAEC has been working to engage Max Mara in a constructive conversation about how to remedy this situation. While it took some time to receive a response, we now have two, though neither take seriously your team's unethical decision to plagiarise and sell unoriginal work.

Upon being informed that the motifs in question were direct copies from traditional Oma clothing, your public relations department claimed that Max Mara had simply "taken inspiration from a pattern of a vintage fabric" and had assumed the patterns were in the "public domain." Firstly, by looking at side-by-side comparisons of Max Mara's pieces and almost any item of Oma dress, you will find that they are far beyond "inspiration." They seem to have been literally scanned and duplicated. Secondly, I'm sure you will agree that a company must exercise due diligence when assuming designs to be "public domain," or better yet, simply create original works. However, what is more troubling than a possible mistake by your design team, is the way your company has refused to examine the issue closely, admit the error, and decide to stop profiting off the sales of the garments.

Clearly, consumers and the general public feel that harvesting and profiting from the creative work of others, particularly ethnic minority groups in developing countries, is wrong, and allowing it to go unchecked sets a dangerous precedent. To date, TAEC's social media posts on the issue have hundreds of comments, almost 6,000 shares, and more than one million views. Over 4,000 people have signed a petition urging you to act. Major publications and news outlets have covered the story, such as People, BuzzFeed News, Fuji TV, Yahoo, MSN, Asia One, NextShark, and Laotian Times, and our organisation continues to receive interview requests. Max Mara will have to explain the situation to its resellers, as well. Companies that carry pieces of the plagiarised line, like Harrods, Saks, Italist, Spartoo, and MatchesFashion, have all been informed of the origin of these designs.

As the chairman of your privately-owned company, we are now reaching out to you directly. Please demonstrate ethical and moral leadership in the fashion and textile industry. We ask that you pull this line from your stores, online shop, and resellers, issue a public statement committing to not plagiarise in the future, and lastly, donate the proceeds earned from the sales of these designs to an organisation of your choice that works to protect the rights of ethnic artisans around the world.

I look forward to your direct reply. Thank you very much.

Tara Gujadhur
Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre
Luang Prabang, Lao PDR