Hidden Complexities

Unfolding Miao Women's Textile Skills

The clothes made by Miao women using elaborate and time-consuming handicrafts fascinate with their unique interplay of colours and shapes. The textile surfaces are often praised for their 'exuberance of colours' and 'explosion of patterns'. However, mostly indigo-dyed, often colourfully embroidered and richly decorated with appliqués, the fabrics hold more: they reveal the complex skills of women in a once oral society who communicate and interact through their textiles. Knowledge of materials and craftswomanship often go hand in hand with the transmission of social or ideological messages.

Based on the Karola Kauffmann Collection, this exhibition approaches the diversity of these skills and shows connections between them. It addresses challenges that both Miao and their craft face today. And last but not least, it highlights questions about the proximity or distance of the self-presentation and representation of ethnic diversity in the context of social change, industrial developments and cultural-political tensions.

The events accompanying the exhibition will be published bi-monthly in the printed programme and in the electronic newsletter.