



Writing with Thread Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities

January 31 to April 12, 2009 | Brittingham Galleries V, VI, and VII

Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities offers a visual feast of exquisite and rare costumes and jewelry from fifteen ethnic groups and nearly one hundred subgroups living in southwest China. These five hundred splendidly woven and embroidered textiles and costume pieces represent work of the finest quality and historic significance. Three galleries will showcase entire ensembles of adults' and children's regalia, baby carriers, quilt covers, and silver ornaments, as well as a loom, weaving tools, and embroidery cases. The exhibition will be on view January 31 to April 12, 2009. An opening reception will be held Friday, January 30, from 7–8:30 p.m.

Southwest China is a region of rich river systems and complex topography, inhabited by thirty-one of the country's fifty-six ethnic groups. *Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities* showcases the superb, detailed craftsmanship from ethnic groups including the Miao (Hmong), Yi, Dong, Tujia, Shui, Zhuang, Dai, Buyi, Yao, Wa, and Zang. The exhibition explores the cultural messages associated with the production and use of indigenous clothing. In societies without written languages, traditions and customs are passed orally from generation to generation. The textile arts, largely practiced by women, also provide tangible evidence of a group's history, myths, and legends. The signs and patterns woven or embroidered in their clothing are often replicated in the accompanying silver ornaments made by men. The textiles and silver ornaments complement a group's oral traditions, recording and transmitting ideas and concepts that preserve the identities of their makers and users, and even reconstruct them for those who have lost touch. The needlework and silverwork of each ethnic group reveal variations in origin myths, heroic combats, communal memories, and wish fulfillment.

Textile scholar Angela Sheng, from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, is principal curator of the exhibition. The objects have been selected from the collection of southwest Chinese textiles owned by Huang Ying-feng, an independent scholar and collector and Director of the Evergrand Museum in Taoyuan, Taiwan. Both will visit the Chazen and give public talks related to the exhibition. Japanese scholar Tomoko Torimaru, who specializes in the history and technology of traditional Chinese Minority textiles, will also come to the Chazen to give a two-part lecture on Miao (Hmong) textile work.

Writing with Thread opened at the University of Hawaii at Manoa Art Gallery, and after it closes at the Chazen Museum of Art it will travel to the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and return to Taiwan for an exhibition in Taipei.

The exhibition was organized by the University of Hawaii Art Gallery and the Evergrand Art Museum, Taoyuan, Taiwan, and is supported by the University of Hawaii at Manoa Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education, John Young Foundation, Blakemore Foundation, Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts through appropriations from the Legislature of the State of Hawaii and the National Endowment for the Arts, Joseph and Vera Zilber Family Foundation, University of Hawaii at Manoa Center for Chinese Studies/Confucius Institute, Carolyn and Warren Luke, Blodwyn Goo Endowment, University of Hawaii Women's Campus Club, Gulab and Indru Watumull Grant for Museum Studies in the Arts, Commercial Data Systems, Wing Tek Lum and Chee Ping Lee Lum, and private contributions.

Generous local support for this exhibition has been provided by the Chazen Museum of Art Council, *The Great Dane Pub & Brewing Co.*, *Group Health Cooperative*, *J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.*, *UW Health*, *Executive Management, Inc.*, Hilldale Fund, and Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Events

--Thursday January 29, 5:30 p.m. Lecture by Huang Ying-feng, independent scholar and collector of Chinese minority costumes, Director of the Evergrand Museum in Taoyuan, Taiwan, and curatorial advisor for "Writing with Thread." Huang introduces the ethnic minorities represented in the exhibition, then

discusses collecting, documenting and classifying pieces, and traveling and interviewing the artisans.

OPENING RECEPTION AND CURATOR LECTURE

Friday January 30, 6 p.m. Curator Lecture: "*Writing with Thread: Idea to Implementation*," by Angela Sheng, professor of Chinese Art History, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Friday January 30, 7 p.m. Opening reception with Madison's Hmong Keng Players and Hmong Sisters dance group, refreshments, and a cash bar.

--Saturday January 31, 1:30 p.m. Textiles curator Angela Sheng and collector Huang Ying-feng will conduct a gallery walk of *Writing with Thread*.

MARION STEMMLER MEMORIAL LECTURES

Japanese scholar Tomoko Torimaru, a specialist in the history and technology of traditional Chinese minority textiles, will deliver two lectures about Miao (Hmong) textiles, discussing materials, stitches, garment construction, symbols, and cultural history. These lectures are presented in honor of Marion Stemmler, an award-winning embroiderer and Chazen Museum of Art docent from 1984 to 2008. They were made possible by generous gifts from her friends and family.

Thursday February 19, 5:30 p.m. "Environment and Material Culture: Textiles and Costumes of the Miao (Hmong) People in Guizhou, China." Ms. Torimaru will discuss the costumes, symbolism, and everyday use, as well as how materials are made.

Sunday February 22, 2 p.m. "One Needle, One Thread: Miao (Hmong) Embroidery and Fabric Piecework from Guizhou, China." Ms. Torimaru will discuss embroidery, piecework, garment construction, and costume symbols. Session includes an illustrated lecture, a hands-on examination of textiles from private research collections, and an exhibition tour.

FAMILY DAY

Saturday, March 28, 12–4 p.m. The Chazen presents a Family Day celebrating Miao (Hmong) culture with storytelling, performances by Hmong Americans, textile technique demonstrations, tours, and art activities. Children under 12 should be accompanied by an adult. Admission is free.

--Sunday, March 29, 2:30 p.m. Gallery tour with Mary Ann Fitzgerald, Chazen Exhibition Coordinator. Mary Ann Fitzgerald has a specialty in textiles and has traveled among the ethnic groups whose costumes are represented in the exhibition. She will lead a tour and discuss representative examples.

--Weekends, February 7 through exhibition closing, 12:30–4:45 p.m. Docents-on-Duty. Chazen docents will be available in *Writing with Thread* to answer questions and present mini-tours.

Return to Current Exhibitions

The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesdays–Fridays 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the north entrance (nearest to Library Mall). An elevator is down the corridor to the right.

Parking is available at the City of Madison State Street Campus Ramp (entrances on Frances and Lake streets) and in the University Square parking ramp, entrance on Lake Street. Metered parking is available in the lower level of UW Lot 46, entrances on Lake and Frances streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available in UW Lot 83 under Fluno Center, entrance on Frances Street, and in UW Lot 7 under Grainger Hall, entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson Street.

The Chazen will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, (608) 263-4421 (voice).

"Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities: A Collector's Journey"

Lecture

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Huang Ying-feng, Director of the Evergrand Museum in Taoyuan, Taiwan

January 29, 2009

From 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM

[Learn More](#)

Lower level, L140

"*Writing with Thread*: Idea to Implementation"

Lecture

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Angela Sheng, Chinese Art History, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario,
Canada

January 30, 2009

From 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Lower level, L140

Public Reception

Opening

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Madison's Hmong Keng Players and Hmong Sisters dance group,
refreshments, and a cash bar.

January 30, 2009

From 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Gallery Walk

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Textiles curator Angela Sheng and collector

Huang Ying-feng will conduct a gallery walk

January 31, 2009

From 1:30 PM to 2:45 PM

Third floor, Meet in Gallery VII

Gallery Walk

Gallery Talk

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Gallery walk with Thomas Kolbe, director emeritus
the University of Hawaii at Manoa Art Gallery

February 1, 2009

From 2:00 PM to 3:15 PM

Third floor, Meet in Gallery VII

Drop-in Tours

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

February 7, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tour

February 8, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tours

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

February 14, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tours

Tour
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Docent-led tours
February 15, 2009
From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

“Environment and Material Culture

Textiles and Costumes of the Miao (Hmong) People in Guizhou, China”

Lecture
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Tomoko Torimaru
February 19, 2009
From 5:30 PM to 6:45 PM
[Learn More](#)
Lower level, L140

Drop-in Tours

Tour
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Docent-led tours
February 21, 2009
From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tours

Tour
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles
of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Docent-led tours
February 22, 2009
From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

“One Needle, One Thread: Miao (Hmong) Embroidery and Fabric Piecework from Guizhou, China”

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[Learn More](#)
Lower level, L140

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February 28, 2009
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Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second Floor, Begins in Paige Court

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March 21, 2009
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Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

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Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Docent-led tours
March 22, 2009
From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

"Tradition and Technique A Celebration of Hmong Culture" An afternoon of activities and entertainment for the whole family

Family Event
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
March 28, 2009
From 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM
[Learn More](#)

Drop-in Tour

Tour
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities"
Docent-led tours
March 28, 2009
From 12:30 PM to 1:10 PM
Docents will answer questions and present mini tours
Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

Tour
Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

March 29, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Gallery Walk

Gallery Talk

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Mary Ann Fitzgerald, exhibition coordinator

March 29, 2009

From 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Third floor, Gallery VII

Drop-in Tour

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

April 4, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

April 5, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

April 11, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second floor, Begins in Paige Court

Drop-in Tour

Tour

Related to "Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles

of Southwest Chinese Minorities"

Docent-led tours

April 12, 2009

From 12:30 PM to 4:45 PM

Docents will answer questions and present mini tours

Second floor, Begins in Paige Court