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POWERFUL HEADRESSES

AFRICA | ASIA

Anne van Cutsem-Vanderstraete

This selection of 120 African and Asian headdresses from the Ira Brind collection takes readers into the most hidden corners of two continents throughout the 20th century.

Over the centuries, craftsmen have applied their creativity and technical skills to exploit the generous resources of Nature to marvelous effect. In this case they have employed seeds, leaves, flowers and fibers from the plant world, along with feathers, plain or iridescent shells, teeth, and fur from the animal kingdom to fashion objects of astonishing beauty, enhanced with the addition of elements in iron, copper, silver, and gold. Down through time such materials have always provided the basis for magnificent headdresses of all variety, including hats, caps, crowns, and headbands. In time, as the conditions of trade and pilgrimage routes improved, rare materials and manufactured products spread all over the globe, as well as new knowledge, techniques, and methods of fabrication. Each class of individual sported a distinct type of headdress: initiates and adults, hunters and warriors, religious dignitaries and healers, rulers and notables; unmarried girls, married women, and young mothers. In each case the author explains their opulence and symbolism to the reader.

Anne van Cutsem-Vanderstraete, art historian, is the author of different books, articles and catalogues on the ethnic world, published by different publishing houses, as 5 Continents, Skira and Dapper.