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**New Textiles Document Artist’s Impressions of India**

“India Through Beginner’s Eyes: New Textiles by Michael James,” a solo exhibition of work by the department chair of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design (TMFD) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, opens on Friday, May 4, 2018 at Modern Arts Midtown, 3615 Dodge St. in Omaha, and continues through May 25. The public is invited to a free reception with the artist from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. on May 4.

In late 2016 and early 2017 James was one of four College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) faculty members who teamed up to lead a joint study tour to India for students from Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design and from the Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management program in the Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences. Ahead of the two-week tour, James spent an additional week doing field research in central Rajasthan, supported in part by an Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources International Impact Award and a CEHS International Seed Grant. The three-week experience was, for James, both revelatory and transformative. “I’ve had a lifelong interest in India, in its arts and diverse cultures, and despite all that I thought I knew going into the trip, it all really moved me in a profound way.”

Being a first-time traveler in the country gave James the opportunity to see with what he calls “beginner’s eyes.” First timers “may not always see beyond the surface or with real penetration,” James stated, “but they tend to notice the unusual in the ordinary, the remarkable in the overlooked, the beautiful in those things taken for granted by others who possess longtime or daily familiarity.” James, who has built a long visual arts career working with color and pattern in his complex, non-traditional quilts, was most attracted by “the vernacular architecture of the places I visited and the detailing, often eccentric and improbable, that distinguishes one building or alley or interior courtyard from another.” Returning from the trip, James set to work manipulating some of the hundreds of photographs he took while in India, altering color, layering and combining and cropping, and finally printing these “pastiches” as he describes them onto cotton fabric with TMFD’s Mimaki digital textile printer. That resulting yardage was then cut, combined and sewn to create evocative textile constructions alluding to the actual and metaphorical doors and passageways through which James traveled while in India.

Michael James holds the Ardis James Professorship in TMFD and has served as its department chair since 2005. His textile art has been featured in both solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States as well as in Europe and the United Kingdom, in China and Japan, and, through the U.S. State Department’s Art-in-Embassies program, in S. Korea, Russia, Cyprus, Georgia, Pakistan, and Poland. James’s work is included in the collections of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian’s American Art Museum, the Museum of Arts & Design in New York City, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Racine Art Museum, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Newark Museum, the Museum of Nebraska Art, and UNL’s International Quilt Study Center and Museum, among others. In 2009 he received the University of Nebraska’s *Outstanding Research and Creative Activity Award*, and in 2016 the College of Education and Human Science’s *Distinguished Research and Creative Career Award.* He is a Fellow of the American Craft Council and a 2015 recipient of the Renwick Alliance’s Master of the Medium Award in Textiles.

Additional information at the gallery website: <http://www.modernartsmidtown.com/>