

ABOUT THE ARTIST...

Although the pieced and quilted fabric constructions for which Michael James is known are strongly rooted in the tradition of American quiltmaking, they nonetheless reflect an idiosyncratic approach to this centuries-old art form. With Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees in Painting and Printmaking (University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, MA., 1971, and Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y., 1973) he is among a group of formally-trained artists who turned in the 1970's from mainstream media to the tactile and sensual appeal that fabric and quilts offer.

James's approach to making has been influenced as much by his training as a painter as by his study of the history and development of American quiltmaking and related techniques. This dual orientation is reflected in the content of the artist's first two books, *THE QUILTMAKER'S HANDBOOK* and *THE SECOND QUILTMAKER'S HANDBOOK*, published originally by Prentice-Hall, Inc. in 1978 and 1981 respectively, and re-published in 1993.

MICHAEL JAMES: STUDIO QUILTS, a monograph examining the development of the artist's work over a period of more than twenty years, was published in 1995 by Editions Victor Attinger of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. With an analytical essay by David Lyon and Patricia Harris and an interview by Patricia Malarcher, the book documents not only the metamorphosis of the artist's work over a 20-year period, but also the working processes that produced that work. In 1997 the book was nominated for the Patricia & Phillip Frost Prize for distinguished scholarship in American Crafts, sponsored by the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian.

James exhibits his work widely in both solo and group exhibitions. He was honored in 1999 with a 25-year retrospective at the National Quilt Museum in Kentucky, and his work has been included in six Quilt National competitions as well as in invitational shows at the American Craft Museum in New York City. His first European solo exhibition took place in 1988 at Galerie Jonas near Neuchâtel, where he again mounted one-person shows in 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2007. He was one of five American textile artists invited to participate in the 8th International Triennale of Tapestry held in 1995 at the Central Museum of Textiles in Lodz, Poland. There his quilt *The Metaphysics of Action: Entropic Forms* received a jury citation.

In 1985 James was commissioned by the Newark Museum in New Jersey, through a grant from the Tiffany Foundation, to create a work for the museum's permanent collection. Commissioned wall

ABOUT THE ARTIST...

quilts are also in numerous private and corporate collections. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Arts and Design in NYC, the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC., as well as the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, North Carolina, the International Quilt Study Center & Museum at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Racine Art Museum, and others.

In 1978 and again in 1988 James was the recipient of Visual Artists' Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and in 1979 and 1988, of Craftsmens' Fellowships from the Artists' Foundation in Boston, MA. For three months in the Fall of 1990 he lived and worked alongside 15 other American and European artists at the La Napoule Art Foundation near Cannes, as a beneficiary of a US/France Exchange Fellowship also offered by the NEA.

James's alma mater, the University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth, awarded him an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree in May 1992, and the following year he was inducted into the Quilter's Hall of Fame. In 1994, he was one of four artists honored with the first biennial Society of Arts and Crafts Award in Boston. In 2001 he was named a Fellow of the American Craft Council. James was honored in 2009 with the University of Nebraska's system-wide "Outstanding Research and Creative Activity" Award, given for a sustained record of excellent accomplishment in research or creative activity while at the university. Since 2002 he has focused his creative efforts on digital textile printing and its interface with the quilt as mixed media platform. His current work explores the liminal and fluid borderland between the physical and metaphysical worlds.

In addition to his studio activities, James has lectured widely on his work and led workshops on color and design not only in North America but throughout Europe and in Asia.

His studio is located in Lincoln, Nebraska where he serves as Professor and Chair of the Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design at the University of Nebraska, the academic home of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum. In addition to his administrative duties, he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in foundation design, textile design and quilt studies.

His work is represented by Modern Arts Midtown in Omaha, NE.

Contact: studioquilts@earthlink.net or mjames2@unl.edu