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WINTER UPDATE 2020

Textiles, Merchandising
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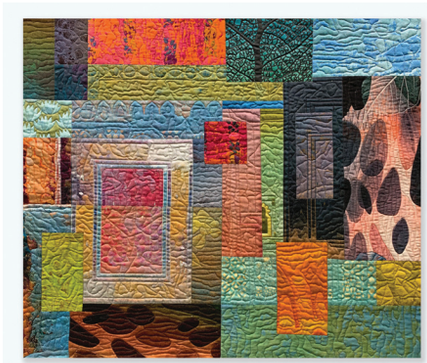
CHAIR RETIREMENT

TMFD PROFESSOR AND CHAIR MICHAEL JAMES RETIRES

Members of the department, college and university communities recently came together to acknowledge the academic service of Professor and Chair Michael James, who stepped down from his position at Nebraska after nearly twenty years on campus, to return to the private sector and to some semblance of retirement. "I don't see myself ever retiring from creative pursuits," said James, "but it's time to hang up my academic hat and turn my focus to other passions."

James came to Nebraska in 2000, serving first as a senior lecturer and then transitioning into the position of Ardis James Professor of Textiles, Clothing and Design, the first named professorship in the College of Education and Human Sciences. Prior to joining the faculty here, James had worked for twenty-five years as an independent studio artist in his home state of Massachusetts, so his relocation to Nebraska in conjunction with the creation of the International Quilt Study Center represented professional, geographical and cultural changes. "The biggest adjustment was figuring out how to navigate academia, what it was all about then, more than a quarter century after I'd last experienced it as a graduate student," James explained. "I have to admit it was somewhat convulsive at first, but it came to be a good fit in the end" he added.



A 2019 quilted textile construction by James titled "Ganesh Pol (Amer)" is the final work in a series that he began in 2017 following the first TMFD Study Tour to India. The quilt's title refers to one of the main gates of the Amer Fort near Jaipur that the study tour group visited.

As an instructor James was heavily involved in his first years at Nebraska with the Visual Literacy Program, a collaborative design foundations curriculum and Program of Excellence partnered at the time by the Hixon-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts, the College of Architecture, the College of Education and Human Sciences, and the College of Journalism. He also developed numerous courses within TMFD in the areas of foundation design and printed textile design, as well as graduate course offerings for the former quilt studies program, now part of the material culture and textile studies masters degree emphasis. "As someone who'd come to textiles more or less accidentally – I'd done degrees in painting and printmaking, but became a self-taught quilt designer and maker – I was really gratified to have the time and encouragement to dive seriously into the nature of textile and quilt practice, and to explore with students through our curriculum the range of methodologies and discourses from which these traditions developed."

In 2005 James assumed the duties of TMFD's department chair. Under his oversight TMFD faculty and staff, working with numerous department, college and university partners, successfully pursued numerous initiatives. These included planning toward and completing the renovation of the east campus building that now houses the Bio-fiber Development Laboratory; two renovations of the Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery, and renovations of other areas of the department's physical plant including the

Photo by David Kostelnik

Mary Mitchell Fashion Studio, the multi-purpose Design Studio, the Kathryn Eriksen Lohr Merchandising Research and Business Development Laboratory, the Body Scanning Laboratory, and the Surface Design studios, all in the Human Sciences building on east campus; working with faculty and staff members of the International Quilt Study Center in planning toward the building of Quilt House, completed in 2008 and followed in 2015 by the opening of an expansion; creating and growing TMFD's Professional Advisory Council; and the hiring of a new cohort of faculty beginning in 2014, just as longtime faculty members were taking advantage of retirement opportunities. "I think one of my proudest achievements is the group of new tenure-leading faculty that we hired these last five years," James stated. "They are enterprising and very smart out-of-the-box thinkers and I move on knowing that the department and its future are in very capable hands."

While carrying out his duties as a teaching faculty member and as department head James continued to sustain an active studio practice. He had solo exhibitions of new work in 2001, each year from 2005 through 2010, and again in 2013, 2015, 2018 and 2019, both in the US and abroad. "I was very fortunate all these years to have Leah Sorensen-Hayes as my studio assistant. She is a key reason that I was able to produce the body of work that made those and other exhibitions possible," James explained.

"Like me, Leah is a perfectionist, and so I always had 100% confidence in her ability to carry out every task that I assigned her. I'll always be very grateful for her commitment to the work. It was really extraordinary."

In the course of his time at UNL James was the recipient of a number of important accolades. In 2001 he was named a Fellow of the American Craft Council, and in 2015 the James Renwick Alliance, a support group of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, honored him with the "Master of the Medium Award in Textiles" for lifetime achievement. He received the "Governor's Arts Award" as Visual Artist of the Year from the Nebraska Arts Council in 2008, and the Lincoln Arts Council's "Mayor's Arts Award for Artistic Achievement" in 2003. In 2009 James received the NU system's Outstanding Research and Creative Activity Award and in 2016, the Distinguished Research & Creative Career Award of the College of Education and Human Sciences. James' work is included in the collection of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, as well as in the collections of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Newark Museum, the Indianapolis Art Museum, the Racine Art Museum, the Museum of Nebraska Art, and the International Quilt Museum.

After the 2014 retirement of the Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery's longtime director Professor Emerita Wendy Weiss, James assumed those management duties and organized and/or curated a number of exhibitions including "Shelley Thornton: Textile Art Dolls" (2019), "Pigment on Cloth: Tradition, Family, and the Art of Indian Pichvai Painting" (2018), "Patchwork and Quilts of North Karnataka, India" (2017), "Wandering Spirit: African Wax Prints" (2016), "Elin Noble: Vox Stellarum" (2016), and "Jan Myers-Newbury: A Touch of Kismet – Quilts, Color, Pattern, Chance" (2015). "The Hillestad Textiles Gallery is one of our main community outreach vehicles" James said, "and over the years we've been able to bring an incredibly diverse range of content to the campus and the region, because of this great exhibition space. I'm confident that the TMFD faculty will continue the gallery's long tradition of featuring the best in the textile and fashion arts under the oversight of the gallery's new manager, Assistant Professor of Practice Michael Burton."

Asked what he'll miss most after he retires, James didn't hesitate. "I was very fortunate to have rich working experiences with many colleagues here, not just in the department and the college, but across the campuses, and I'll always be grateful for these associations. I think above all, the mentorship, guidance and support that former CEHS Dean Marjorie Kostelnik provided to me over the dozen or so years that I was one of her 'direct reports' made my job as chair so much more manageable than it would have been otherwise. Also in that regard, I have to acknowledge the exceptional support of the department's administrative assistant Rosanne Samuelson, whose remarkable institutional knowledge and unfailing attention to detail and timelines always kept me on task and on time. If I walk out of here with a sense of having done a decent job, it's with a real debt to the skills of these two individuals who helped me find my way as an administrator."

Through the Spring 2020 semester James will continue to occupy the Ardis James Professorship Studio in the Human Sciences Building on east

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James and his studio assistant and TMFD alumna Leah Sorensen-Hayes examine one of his recent fabric designs as it's being printed on the department's Mimaki digital textile printer.

Photo by Greg Nathan

(Continued from page 2)

campus (formerly the Home Economics Building), where he and Sorensen-Hayes will complete the cataloguing of his archives, headed to Love Library's Special Collections. "Over more than a quarter century I moved throughout the international quilt world and maintained correspondence with many of its key figures," James said. "This material will help future scholars in learning about the development of what's now called the 'art quilt' or 'studio quilt' and will help to document the evolution of that movement." James also anticipates increased leisure travel in the months and years ahead, and plans to continue the studio practice that he's carried on now for approaching fifty years. "They say that artists never retire, they die," James reflected with a laugh. "While I certainly hope that's not in my near future, I do expect that I'll continue to make things and to be creative and productive in the years ahead. I really don't know any other way to be in this world."

Individuals interested in personally acknowledging James' service to TMFD and to the university may make a donation to the Judith Dionne James Graduate Fellowship Fund (01135600) at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Please visit the University of Nebraska Foundation at nufoundation.org for additional information.

Michael James with donors John and Mary Mitchell at the dedication of the Mary Mitchell Fashion Studio, Sunday October 21, 2012.

Photo by Orville Friesen

INTERIM CHAIR PROFILE

Dr. Yiqi Yang assumes Interim Chair duties in TMFD

Yiqi Yang, Charles Bessey Professor in TMFD, began the Spring 2020 semester as the interim chair of the department following the retirement of Professor Michael James. "I am very pleased that Dr. Yang has agreed to take on the responsibilities of chairing the dynamic department of TMFD," said Sherri Jones, dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences. "Knowing that he has the full support of the TMFD faculty reassured me that appointing him to shoulder these responsibilities was the right move."

Yang, who joined the TMFD faculty in 2001, has a long and extremely productive career as a textile chemical engineer with research focused on the development of new lignocellulosic, protein and synthetic fibers derived from agricultural waste and byproducts. Since coming to Nebraska Yang has maintained close relationships with the fiber and textile industries internationally, and he has established a very successful record of publications and external funding. Most recently, Yang was the recipient of a grant award in the amount of $464,434 from the US Department of Agriculture-NIFA for a four-year project entitled Protein Fibers From Chicken Feathers For Textile Applications Via Engineered Pilot-Scale Production. This project holds particular promise for the Nebraska economy, given the expansion of poultry processing in various parts of the state.

Known as a devoted mentor to his graduate student team, Yang has worked tirelessly to push his advisees to achieve beyond what they thought they could do. "While he's a tough taskmaster, his guidance is always on target and we know that in our success as students, he sees his own success multiplied many times," said Ph.D. student Faqrul Hassan.

"I'm humbled that the faculty has the confidence in me to want me to serve in this capacity," Yang said. "I look forward to working with colleagues in other parts of the college and the university to guide the department as it continues to evolve. There are a lot of changes happening here at Nebraska and I'll do all I can to help the department to do its share to make those changes successful ones."

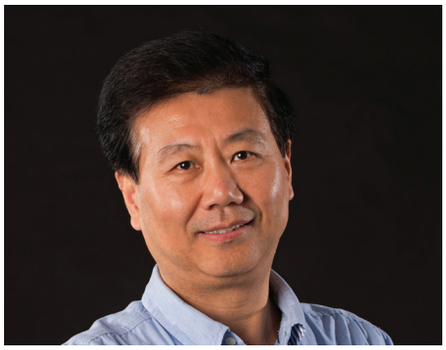


Photo by Greg Nathan

TEXTILES SCIENCE

News from TMFD's Textile Science Team

Bingnan Mu receives the Skala Fellowship Award from Dr. Archie Clutter, Dean and Director of IANR's Agricultural Research Division.

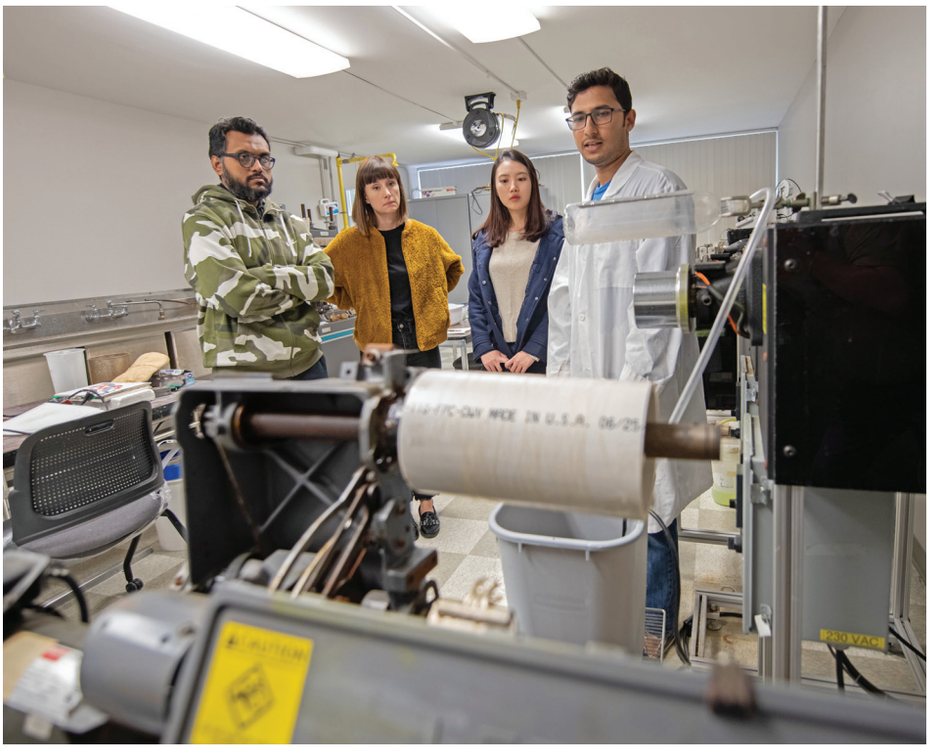
The department's textile science team members, with Dr. Yiqi Yang's enthusiastic leadership and mentoring, continue to make their mark in the area of bio-based fibers.

Mohammed Arafat Hossain has received a Foreign Fulbright Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State, supporting his M.S. education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Mr. Hossain earned his Bachelor of Science in textile technology from Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology and a Master of Science in textile engineering from Daffodil International University, both in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Bingnan Mu, a PhD student in textile science, has received the 2019 John and Louise Skala Fellowship, that comes with a stipend of $5000. The Skala Fellowship was established in 1990 to commemorate the life of the donor's parents, John and Louise Skala. This fellowship is granted annually to full-time graduate students in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources who are engaged in research to develop new uses of agricultural products. This is the third time that Bingnan has received this award, which will help him to continue research on the fundamentals of bio-based fibers and their textile applications. Bingnan earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in chemistry and chemical engineering from Donghua University in Shanghai, China.

Faqrul Hassan has received an award of $1,200 from the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists Foundation to partially support his dissertation work focused on developing regenerated protein fibers from sorghum distiller's grain. Faqrul is pursuing his Ph.D, in textile science. He completed his Bachelor's degree in textile engineering in his home country of Bangladesh, and a Master's degree from Colorado State University.

Dr. Yiqi Yang has been awarded $464,434 by the program for Bioprocessing and Bioengineering of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's NIFA-AFRI division, to perform research on industrial utilizations of chicken feathers. This research is zeroing in on pilot-scale production of regenerated protein fibers developed from feather keratin, and diverse applications of these fibers in textiles, including yarn manufacturing, fabric formation and wet processing. The USDA grant is a continuation of earlier research supported by a grant of $211,885 from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Yang and his students have been working on this project for more than 20 years, and have made important breakthroughs over the years that have led them to this final stage. Currently they are optimizing the continuous wet-spinning conditions that will set the stage for pilot-scale production. With the pending launch of large-scale poultry processing plants in Nebraska, the team's work promises the potential to help mitigate the volume of waste product generated by such plants.



TMFD textile science graduate students Md Arafat Hossain (left) and Faqrul Hassan explain the Bio-fiber Development Laboratory's wet processing line to students Erin Smith and Jeongwon Choi. The lab's team is advancing research in bio-fiber processing under the leadership of TMFD's Interim Department Chair Dr. Yiqi Yang.

9TH ANNUAL PAC CONVOCATION

TMFD Professional Advisory Council Convocation Brings Industry Insights and Trends to Faculty and Students

From October 16 through 18, 2019, members of TMFD's Professional Advisory Council again brought their industry knowledge and insights to faculty and students as they convened for the ninth official convocation of the group that first met in 2007. Originally formed with support from the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and a one-time grant from the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence, the group's members, comprised of a diverse roster of textile and apparel professionals, have given generously of their time and resources to engage with the department and to provide learning opportunities for students.

This year's PAC participants included keynote speakers Mercedes Gonzalez, Director of Global Purchasing Companies of New York City, and Mike Niemtzow, co-founder of WindowsWear of NYC; Brook Hudson, co-founder of Omaha Fashion Week; Andi Curtis, a global trade classification specialist formerly with Cabela's in Sidney, NE; Nicole Ruskamp, owner of Colea Alterations in Lincoln; Meghan Ehrke, owner of Select Style Boutique in Lincoln; Kirby Baker, District Leader for Buckle of Kearney, NE; Scott Bowen, President of Signs & Shapes in Omaha; and Brooke Mullen, founder and designer of Sapahn of Lincoln.

"We recognize the importance to our faculty and to our students of regular contact with professionals in the industry who bring perceptions from the field that are current as well as forward-looking," said TMFD Chair Emeritus Michael James, whose office organized the event. "We believe that external industry insights are enormously helpful in preparing our students for success as they move into the professions and their careers, and to our faculty as they continuously work to create curricula that are responsive to the needs of the industries that employ our graduates. We all learn so much from having these talented and dedicated individuals with us."

Members of the TMFD Professional Advisory Council attending the 2019 convocation included (left to right): Scott Bowen, Brook Hudson, Nicole Ruskamp, Megan Ehrke, Mercedes Gonzalez, Mike Niemtzow, Kirby Baker, Brooke Mullen and Andi Curtis.

Mercedes Gonzalez answers students' questions at an open forum session during the 2019 PAC convocation.

This year the full-day convocation kicked off with keynote talks presented by Mercedes Gonzalez and Mike Niemtzow, both based in New York City. Gonzalez, author of "Chronicles of a Fashion Buyer", is a perennial favorite among students and known widely for her depth of experience in the fashion trade, and for her well-earned New York "street smarts." "Don't have any illusions," Gonzalez counseled students in discussing successful business launches. "The playing field is constantly changing and you don't have the luxury of time. You really have to know how product development and distribution work, what merchandising that product entails, and how your bottom line determines whether you sink or swim."

In his presentation titled "Five Important Take-aways for Visual Merchandising in 2019", Niemtzow, an entrepreneur and co-founder of WindowsWear, a fashion technology company headquartered in New York City that showcases real-time and archival collections of fashion windows and visual displays dating back to 1931, highlighted his company's mission to provide competitive research, information, insights, and trends for visual creatives to enhance and coordinate their brand's physical and e-commerce environments. "Even if you're committed to a brick-and-mortar platform, your business has to be front-and-center in digital media if you have any hope of succeeding in fashion's fast-paced, ever-changing environment," Niemtzow advised students.

In addition to participating in panel discussions that covered topics including "Building Your Own Soft Goods Business Do's and Don'ts", "Creating Networks that Grow Your Bottom Line", and "Main Street USA – Hometown Visual Merchandising That Works", PAC members interfaced with students and faculty in brainstorming and small group table sessions that covered topics ranging from "Why Sustainable Fashion Systems Matter" to "First Impressions Count: Presenting Yourself and Your Portfolio." A small business "quick-pitch" session facilitated by TMFD Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist Andrew Zimbroff saw a group of TMFD undergraduate entrepreneurs take to the podium to sketch out a variety of business venture aspirations and to get instant feedback from the PAC visitors. "It was pretty scary to get up in front of them," said design emphasis student Jennifer Lopez, "but what they said in response to my ideas made a lot of sense and actually helped my self-confidence. I walked away from that session feeling that I really could have my own business once I finish my program, and that my product idea is definitely worth developing."

The next TMFD Professional Advisory Council convocation is tentatively planned for October 2020. Exact dates will be announced at a later time.

PAC member Mercedes Gonzalez delivers one of the keynote presentations at the 2019 convocation.

Designer: Lynlee Medhi
Modeled by Faron Medhi

Designer: Justin Zhou
Modeled by Haley Bieber

Designer: Heather Striebel
Modeled by Cameron Currie

PROJECT FUNWAY BENEFIT

TMFD Designers Again Support Fresh Start Home's Project Funway

By Tricia A. Fenster, Academic Advisor, Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design

Photos by Loren Rye

Fred Rogers, famous for his role as Mister Rogers in his iconic red cardigan sweater, once said, "Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." On Friday, November 1, 2019, supporters of the Fresh Start Home and local fashion designers joined together to celebrate new beginnings at the 10th Annual Project Funway fashion show at the Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel. The event included a VIP pre-party, a pop-up location of The Daisy Thrift Boutique, a silent auction, and a runway show which featured the work of Nebraska fashion design students and alumni, and a special 10th Anniversary Showcase of winning designs from previous years. All proceeds from the charity event support the Fresh Start Home, a transitional shelter that empowers women experiencing homelessness to change their lives.

The spirit of the fashion show was to transform thrifted, discarded, and found materials into new, original, runway-worthy designs. At the start of the runway, photographs of sourced materials were shared on the screen so that the transformation from found-to-finished could be fully appreciated. Examples included favorite dresses refashioned as children's formal wear, skirts, and blouses. Denim bib overalls and vintage handkerchiefs became stylish sundresses. Many designs were pieced from salvaged segments of previously-owned clothes. Students from Dr. Sandra Starkey's TMFD 471 Experimental Apparel Design class were given the additional challenge to use unconventional materials to create wearable art accessories, and pieces inspired by the qualities of tin. Models were outfitted in everything from Christmas bulbs, to a birdcage skirt, to metal cherry blossom accents, and to shrugs fashioned from aluminum cans and salvaged metal, to name a few of the unconventional materials that appeared on the catwalk that night.

This year's event featured Lauren Silverman, KX 96.9 Morning Show Co-Host, as Master of Ceremonies. The invited celebrity judges were: Vanessa Barrett, an interior designer, and Omaha Fashion Week judge; Emmy Gorman, a designer, and owner of Blush Bridal

Boutique; and Kyler Jasnoch, a designer, an expert in fit and alternations at Colea Alternations, and a Project Funway alumna. Audience members were also invited to vote for their favorite creations.

Congratulations to the
2019 Project Funway award winners:

Best of Show Overall
Lynlee Medhi

1st Place Community Choice
Lynlee Medhi

2nd Place Community Choice
Linda Zinke

3rd Place Community Choice
Deanna Brakhage

Honorable Mention, Community Choice
Erin Smith

Best Integrity of Original Material
Hannah Hidalgo

Most Innovative
Deanna Brakhage

Best of Show in Experimental Design
Son Nguyen

GRADUATE STUDENT PROFILES

Photos by Greg Nathan

Anna Kuhlman

Material Culture and Textile Studies

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and your educational background.

I am originally from Kansas but grew up with Nebraska pride as my dad's side of the family is from here. Starting in middle school I realized I had a great interest in clothing, style, and trends. It was also the time I learned to sew. In high school this passion grew and I was interested in studying in this area in college. I ended up studying Fashion Merchandising and Fashion Design with minors in Business and Art History for my undergraduate degrees at UNL. But my real love has always been dress history. When I was young, through Girl Scouts I was able to participate at Old Cowtown Museum in Wichita, Kansas. Not only did we get to dress in period appropriate clothes but we learned about and practiced life in the Victorian Age. I was enthralled by this immersive history and have not been able to stay away since. I am very excited that now I have the opportunity to study dress history even closer through my pursuit of a master's degree in Material Culture and Textile Studies.

Q: Where do your main research interests lie and where do you want to take them?

Although I enjoy just about any period between the 1700s and 1970s, I have really found myself drawn to the 20th century, especially the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. The 1940s, especially World War II, are my top interest. I even designed a line for Omaha Fashion Week last August based on women's workwear during World War II. It was a fun opportunity to research silhouettes, fabrications, and techniques of the era. I am particularly interested in the everyday woman and how trends, norms, and culture affect clothing choices. I'm also keen to know more about what the clothing choices mean in terms of self-presentation.

Because of my fashion design degree I am also interested in the construction and re-creation of historic garments. Making clothing can also be a very useful tool for understanding the clothing and people of the past. I enjoy re-creating history authentically and creating new designs rooted in historical accuracy.

Q: Can you speak about your research appointment with the Youth Entrepreneurship Clinics project and how you apply your skills & background in TMFD to the work you are doing on that project?

My position with Youth Entrepreneurship Clinics (YEC) has allowed me to apply my business and design background. In short, the goal of YEC is to empower high school students to solve real life business challenges through entrepreneurship and technology skills. This curriculum is geared toward rural communities, particularly to address the challenge of rural flight or out-migration. There are many moving parts to this project including program evaluation, implementation, marketing, and publication.

Because of my design background, I have been able to help with developing marketing and promotional materials. Although I am not trained as a graphic designer, I enjoy using my design skills in different ways. My business knowledge has served me well when we evaluate and improve the program. I also have been working a lot with data we collect from the program, which has been very useful in learning to work with qualitative methods.

Q: In your "down" time what interests give you the most satisfaction?

This will not come as a surprise, but I love sewing, especially historical garments. I enjoy each step of the process from research, to designing or selecting a pattern, to actually making the garment itself. I can easily spend hours just researching various components. Then after I finish the garment I have something fun to wear every day, as I wear a lot of vintage style clothes, or a piece for a specific historical event. My roommate and I even have a sewing area in our living room to cater to this very passion.

One of the other most satisfying parts of my life comes through nurturing community, relationships, and myself personally through my church. We have a great dynamic of lifting up and supporting each other through both the good and bad. My personal faith is what gives me guidance and understanding, and I am glad I have a group of people to share it with.

Q: What are your plans once you complete your masters studies?

My career goals point me toward being a museum curator in a textile or costume related department, or to pursue historic costume design. I enjoy both examining existing artifacts and recreating them for modern uses. I have had opportunities to work with TMFD's Historic Costume Collection and with some living history museums, and to work with costumers and assist in several performance productions. Right now, I am leaning more toward costume design but I'm open to whatever opportunities appear as I near graduation.

Faqrul Hassan

Textile Science

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and your educational background.

I am from Bangladesh. I grew up in a small town in a very loving family that supported every decision I've made. I received my Bachelor's degree in textile engineering from Bangladesh University of Textiles. Because Bangladesh's economy heavily relies on the textile and apparel industries, I saw an opportunity to work on the current technological challenges that the textile industries face and to make eco-friendly and sustainable products. So, I decided to pursue higher education to get involved in research in textile science and technology. I came to the US in 2016 to complete my master's program at Colorado State University in textile science. To qualify for a future academic career I decided in 2018 to pursue a Ph.D. in textile science here at UNL.

Q: Where do your main research interests lie and where do you want to take them?

Currently, I am working on the development of regenerated protein fibers from industrial waste materials like chicken feathers and sorghum grains. Nowadays synthetic fibers have become one of the major challenges related to environmental problems and health hazards. I am mainly motivated to find alternative bio-based fibers that could replace traditional petroleum-based synthetic fibers. In the long run, I plan to work on industrial-scale production and to develop new dyeing techniques for these fibers.

Q: As a graduate assistant to Dr. Yiqi Yang, what kinds of opportunities has that association offered you?

Being a graduate assistant to Dr. Yang has allowed me to learn how to develop new project ideas and set the right research trajectory as an independent researcher. Dr. Yang's group is constantly helping me to learn advanced concepts in textile science and to deepen my insights on possible innovations. Working in such a supportive group helps me to stay motivated.

Q: You came to the US from Bangladesh. What are your impressions of the Lincoln area and what, if anything, surprised you, that you weren't expecting? What, if anything, do you miss most about your home country?

The US and Lincoln were a totally new world for me. The streets, people, food, and weather are all different compared with my home country. The quiet streets in Lincoln struck me the most when I first came here. Street life is much noisier and more animated in Bangladesh. So it took a little time to adapt to this new environment, but I'm comfortable now. Still, I miss the delicious foods and diverse natural beauty of Bangladesh.

Q: In your "down" time what interests give you the most satisfaction?

As a graduate assistant, it's difficult to have downtime. If I have some downtime, I like to learn history and pick up new skills like fishing, crafting, and sometimes learning different data presentation techniques.

Q: What are your plans once you complete your doctoral studies?

I want to be an academic, but I'm content to keep my options open for the time being. If I were to enter academia, I'd first like to work in industry for a period of time to hone my expertise in textile technologies and their development. I believe this would greatly help to further my knowledge in this field and make me a stronger academic.

Venn Veronica Jemkur

Material Culture and Textile Studies

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and your educational background.

My name is Venn Veronica Jemkur, and I was born in the Northern region of Nigeria, West Africa. I am the fourth out of six children; I have two brothers and three sisters. My dad has been a Professor in Archaeology for over 26 years, and my mum has been a nurse for 40 years and also a counselor working with students and staff at the University of Jos, Nigeria. I've always wanted to study fashion design and my mum encouraged my passion. She enrolled me in informal classes with a local tailor during the holidays, and after some years I started making garments for family and friends and eventually built my own clientele. I initially studied micro-biology, but it wasn't my passion. My family and mum especially encouraged me to apply to the Fashion and Design program at the University of East London. I did, and then graduated with First honors so my parents insisted I further my studies. I liked that idea, so I applied to three colleges here in the US. I was admitted to all three and I decided to follow my instincts and go with University of Nebraska. I was fascinated by the International Quilt Study Center and I imagined all I could learn there and through working with the knowledgeable faculty in the department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design.

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STAFF STAR AWARD

Rosanne Samuelson receives CEHS Staff Star Award

Rosanne Samuelson recently received the good news that, for the second time, she is the recipient of the CEHS Staff Star Award. The award comes with a $300 honorarium and a personally inscribed glass star. Staff Star Award criteria include innovation and outstanding performance, and service above and beyond. Rosanne is eminently deserving in each of these categories.

"Rosanne is unfailingly dependable and has the unique ability to anticipate both the department chair's needs as well as those of the faculty," said Rosanne's nominator Professor and Chair Emeritus Michael James. "This is extremely reassuring," James continued, "as it's easy for the chair and the faculty to lose sight of key tasks, issues and deadlines when the day-to-day onslaught of 'stuff' can be so relentless. Rosanne is very much like the rock around which everything else swirls here in TMFD, and she manages to keep it all together for us. She is unflappable and her follow-through is 100%."

Professor Michael James presents the CEHS Star Award to Rosanne Samuelson.

Photo by Loren Rye

"This is such a well-deserved honor for Rosanne," commented TMFD Assistant Professor Claire Nicholas. "She is the pillar that supports all our work, and she keeps the machine running very smoothly. All of us in TMFD recognize the critical role that she plays in helping the entire department to continually move forward, and we sincerely appreciate it." Rosanne received the Staff Star Award once before, in 2012.

(Continued from page 10)

Q: Where do your main research interests lie and where do you want to take them?

My research interest lies in Design, I have always loved Avant-Garde designs, using my imagination to create designs that would provoke intense reactions from the audience, doesn't matter if it's a good or bad reaction (laughs). I would like to explore larger body sizes in Avant-Garde designs. I am open to further research in this area and open to contributing to the lack of fashionable larger body size Avant-Garde designs in the present fashion industry.

Q: You came to Lincoln from Nigeria, by way of the University of East London. What are your impressions of Nebraska and of Lincoln, and what, if anything, surprised you, that you weren't expecting? What, if anything, do you miss most about your home country?

When I first came to Nebraska I was perplexed by the extreme cold weather. I came in the peak of winter, I had no friends, the environment was covered in snow. After a few months, I wondered if this city ever got green like the pictures on the website?! Soon enough I made a few friends and along came spring which in my opinion wasn't much different from winter! Then summer arrived and I couldn't believe it! Wow. I had been in Nebraska for five months but hadn't seen Nebraska because of the terrible winter, summer felt like I just arrived into the U.S.A. Nebraska is a beautiful state with friendly people. The winter hides not only the beauty in Nebraska but the friendly attitudes of the people, they have beautiful hearts. My advice for new international students, enroll in the fall so you can enjoy the very best of Nebraska before winter strikes. I miss home terribly, I miss the food mostly, sometimes you just need Mum's cooking to brighten your day (smile).

Q: In your "down" time what interests give you the most satisfaction

I love binge-watching series, I like science fiction, adventure, drama, romance, educative documentaries. I get scared at night when I watch horror movies, so I avoid them. I also research on different ways to create texture on fabrics and try to tweak the processes to suit what I want to design. I love road trips; it gives me the opportunity to explore the beautiful farmlands in the mid-west, it reminds me of home.

Q: What are your plans once you complete your graduate studies?

I intend to apply for Ph.D. in Apparel design or Material culture here at UNL. I guess I am beginning to love Nebraska's cold weather.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

I think the previous questions covered all the important things to know about me. On a final note, I am grateful for the opportunity to be in this esteemed department with incredible faculty and staff members. Thanks to Michael James, the department chair of TMFD for placing the needs and concerns of students first. Thanks to my advisor Dr. Sandra Starkey for her unwavering support from the first day I stepped into the department building, much appreciated.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT

TMFD Faculty Advancing Nebraska Sustainable Community Project with Youth Civic Engagement Focus

Research shows that a lack of civic engagement and the need for an increased sense of community are two critical social issues affecting individuals throughout Nebraska and the country. These problems create barriers that impede revitalization in high-poverty communities with large minority populations. A group of faculty in the College of Education and Human Sciences and in Nebraska Extension has been awarded funding of $640,000 through a Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to address this issue through youth education in civics, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

To achieve this goal, the team will identify pressing issues in Nebraska and engage at-risk youth to address these issues through an experiential youth summer camp that will incorporate multiple nationally acclaimed evidence-based programs. The programming aims to equip at-risk youth with the knowledge and tools they need to engage constructively in their communities, and to see themselves as active participants in their futures, cultivating a sense of belonging that will strengthen those communities.

The project is led by Dr. Jeong-Kyun Choi, Children and Poverty Extension Specialist and Associate Professor, Dr. Maria de Guzman, Adolescent Extension Specialist and Associate Professor, Dr. Gilbert Parra, Associate Professor, and Surin Kim, TMFD Entrepreneurship Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor. The two Extension partner sites chosen by the team are Omaha and Scottsbluff, and constituents there will participate in developing and implementing a pilot program that, after full development and evaluation, will be distributed to and activated in other communities in Nebraska.

"I'm excited to work with the team in developing an innovative educational model for at-risk youth and in addressing critical social issues through youth entrepreneurship education and civic engagement," Surin Kim commented. "These are important areas of engagement for me and they embody some of the local and regional challenges that I came to Nebraska to help to address."

iCivics software will help the CYFAR grant team to advance their research project.

Surin Kim

Photo by Greg Nathan

MAGGIE HILTNER EXHIBITION

"Maggy Rozycki Hiltner: Vantage Point" Continues in the Hillestad Textiles Gallery through February 14

Installation and detail photos of Hiltner exhibition by Larry Gawel

The current Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery exhibition recently drew kudos from L. Kent Wolgamott of the Lincoln Journal Star, who cited its "vision and effectiveness" and its power as a "cautionary look at a world under siege, primarily from human consumption and the activities needed to fill that need for food, oil, power, etc." Curated by TMFD Assistant Professor of Practice Michael Burton, the show, which opened in October, runs through February 14.

Maggy Rozycki Hiltner is a full-time studio artist and activist living in Red Lodge, MT. She comes from a family of makers: her mother and grandmothers created needlepoint pillows, made quilts and stitched or knitted their clothes and toys; her father built odd things and cooked what she describes as "outrageous meals", and he painted murals in their home.

Hiltner's previous work centered on intimate figurative narratives, Dick-and-Jane style children brought together in semi-autobiographical scenes from Hiltner's own childhood. She was raised in Pennsylvania, the land of coal and steel and their by-product, industrial waste. The more she researched the area's social and industrial history, the more she knew she had to address pollution, both seen and unseen, in her personal landscapes.

Hiltner grew up in the 10-mile evacuation radius of Limerick Generating Station, a nuclear power plant in Pottstown, PA. The Limerick towers could be seen from the windows of her middle school classroom. The artist and her childhood friends swam in the bathtub-warm water downstream from the power plant. "The Schuylkill River, once dubbed America's foulest river, was cleaned up in the 40s and 50s—this meant the coal silt was dredged from the river and dumped in an area we kids would later call 'The Black Desert'," said Hiltner. "After a day of riding our bikes through the Black Desert, we had to hose off the black silt before we'd be allowed in the house. On Thanksgiving trips to Grandma's, my father would make a short detour through Centralia, so the family could check on the progress of the underground coal fire that had been burning there since 1962." These troubling environmental exposures have impacted both Hiltner's adulthood and her creative output.

In April 2014, Hiltner was selected to create an installation for the Mesa (Arizona) Contemporary Arts Museum's Dr. Ruth Tan Lim Project Room. For

an embroidery artist, filling 72 linear feet of wall space with hand-stitched imagery would be the largest project she'd undertaken to date. She began by designing an idealized landscape with a big blue sky, green grass, and puffy white clouds. Researching ways of depicting cloud forms led her to thinking about clouds as water vapor and then water vapor as greenhouse gas. And other clouds— volcanic plumes, mushroom clouds, emissions from factories and puffs rising from the cooling towers of nuclear reactors—drew her attention as well. The resulting piece, Vantage Point, traveled from Mesa to other venues, changing shape to fit each one. In 2018, Hiltner stitched an additional 39 linear feet to make the piece site-specific for the Holter Art Museum in Helena, Montana.

Maggy Hiltner set herself to stitching into her landscapes both natural and man-made disasters as she continued to research these ecological problems. Maps and illustrations drew Hiltner to include portolan lines and vanishing points—adding movement and a linear design element and poking fun at her tendency towards flat representation. "I included found embroidery cut from countless tablecloths and handkerchiefs," Hiltner stated. The artist generated a list of terms and places picked up from headlines, news stories, and research that became a news ticker above and below each panel, informing the individual scenes. The world Hiltner visualized is still beautiful, but the impact of human consumption and waste is everywhere.

Hiltner regularly searches antique shops, thrift stores and yard sales for embroidered linens, collecting the brightly colored flowers, foliage, and animals that eventually make their way into her work. What she cannot find she hand-stitches herself and then mixes in with the salvaged embroideries. She uses the familiarity of the stitch along with seemingly lighthearted and cheerful designs to convey more serious subject matter. In Hiltner's landscapes, very rarely is everything quite what it seems.

The Hillestad Gallery is located in the Human Sciences Building (formerly the Home Economics Building) on UNL's East campus, at 1650 N. 35th St. The gallery is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each weekday, and at other times by appointment. Admission is always free and complimentary guest parking is available near the Human Sciences building and also in metered stalls in the Nebraska East Union lot.

*For more information, visit **textilegallery.unl.edu** or call the department office at 402-472-2911.*

Please join us for the Vantage Point exhibition lecture by Maggy Rozycki Hiltner.

2:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 13, 2020

Room 216
Home Economics Building
UNL's East Campus

The lecture is free and open to all.