

**URMILA MOHAN**  
Brooklyn, New York  
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**Education**

**Ph.D., Anthropology, 2015.**

**University College London (UCL)**

London

Dissertation on religion, cloth and praxis titled “Clothing as Efficacious Intimacy in Iskcon”.

**M.F.A., Studio Art, 2009.**

**Pennsylvania State University (PSU)**

University Park, PA

Thesis on body, embodiment and clothing titled “Skin Deep”.

**B.A. (Hons) Anthropology, 2000.**

**Victoria University of Wellington**

Wellington, New Zealand

**5 yr. Diploma, Communication Design, 1998.**

**National Institute of Design (NID)**

Ahmedabad, India

Thesis titled “Aliens in Their Own Land”. A film on the *Pithoro* wall painting tradition in Gujarat.

**Work  
Experience**

Spring 2019

**Adjunct Faculty, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NYU**

- Developing and teaching undergraduate courses on textiles and religion in South/ SE Asia.

2016-2018

**2016-18 AMNH-BGC Postdoctoral Fellow, Museum Anthropology**

Project titled “Fabricating Power with Balinese Textiles”

- Curated exhibit on Balinese textiles (February 23-July 8, 2018).  
[www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/82/fabricating-power-with-balinese-textiles](http://www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/82/fabricating-power-with-balinese-textiles)
- Artifactual and archival research on Asian Ethnographic Collections at American Museum of Natural History, Nyc; Library of Congress, D.C.; and Tropenmuseum, Netherlands.
- Fieldwork in Bali, Indonesia over Summer 2016.
- Taught MA courses at Bard Graduate Center that involved students in exhibit curation.
- Mentored high school students from Bard High School Early College.
- Led hands-on sessions and talks for the public over 2016-18 to explore Balinese textiles.
- Engaged with the public through curatorial tours and Balinese performance groups.
- Worked closely with Art Department to design exhibit catalog.

2014-present

**Founder and Editor of “Material Religions” Blog**

<http://materialreligions.blogspot.com>

- Worked to include the blog as part of undergraduate syllabi in universities in the UK, US and Canada such as the University of Hull (religious studies), CUNY Brooklyn (Asian civilizations) and University of Toronto (religious studies).
- Galvanized students, early-career researchers and senior scholars to contribute original research.
- Developed fruitful relationships with scholars working internationally in different disciplines.
- Initiated collaborative events and discussions through the blog.

2007-2018

### **Organization of Conferences and Panels**

- “Bali and Beyond: Culture, Power, and Indonesian Textiles”, Symposium Panel, February 2018, Bard Graduate Center, Nyc. [www.bgc.bard.edu/events/770/26-feb-2018-symposium-bali](http://www.bgc.bard.edu/events/770/26-feb-2018-symposium-bali). Logistics and planning by Laura Minsky, BGC.
- “Borders and Boundaries: Politics of Mobility in Museum Settings”, Co-organized with Claire Heckel, Panel for the American Association of Anthropologists, Council of Museum Anthropology, Washington, D.C., November 2017.
- “The Bodily AND Material Cultures of Religious Subjectivation” co-organized with Jean-Pierre Warnier, Professor Emeritus, L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris. A two-day conference at UCL, London, on the role of materials and techniques in making the religious subject. June 2014. [www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/anthropology-news/religious-subjectivation](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/anthropology-news/religious-subjectivation)
- “Material and Sensory Attachment: Intimate Engagement in Religion and Politics”, Panel at American Anthropological Association (AAA), D.C. December 2013.
- “India: A Veneration Nation?” co-organized with Jill Reese. A one-day symposium at UCL on material/visual aspects of Indian devotional culture. June 12, 2012. [www.venerationnation.co.uk](http://www.venerationnation.co.uk)

**Teaching Experience**  
2016-2018

### **Bard Graduate Center for Decorative Arts, Design History and Material Culture**

New York, New York

- Bard Graduate Center Masters Program: Developed and taught *Fabricating Power in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Balinese Textiles*, Courses I and II, Spring 2017 and Fall 2017. The first course contextualized Balinese and Indonesian textiles from historical and anthropological perspectives. The second course was a practical engagement of students in curatorial tasks including the development of interpretive text, content for a digital interactive, and ideas for public engagement.
- Student projects in both courses were designed around the close study of museum objects in art and ethnographic museums such as the American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Museum, and Cooper Hewitt Design Museum.
- Special attention was paid to processes of fabrication, design, and actions, and how these relate to cultural values and symbolism. [www.bgc.bard.edu/research-forum/articles/187/fellows-talk](http://www.bgc.bard.edu/research-forum/articles/187/fellows-talk)
- Bard High School Early College: Developed and taught modules on “Disobedient Objects” and “Ethnographic Approaches to Objects” over Summer 2017. Mentored high school students over Fall 2017 in the study of South Asian devotional objects. Topics included worship in Tibetan shrines and Hindu altars across homes, stores and museums.

2013

### **Srishti College of Art, Design and Technology**

Bangalore, India

- Developed and taught module on “Society, Culture and Technology” for first year design students in course titled *How to Think About Things: An Introduction to Material Culture*. (Design as a social-material transformational process with discussion of contemporary examples such as the London Underground map and the evolution of the modern bicycle.)

### **National Institute of Design**

Ahmedabad, India

- Ethnographic techniques for undergraduate and postgraduate graphic design students.
- Students applied the methodological/analytical tool of the *chaîne opératoire* to their graphic design projects. <https://whatimagesdo.wordpress.com>

2007-09

## Pennsylvania State University

University Park, PA

- Developed and taught *Introduction to Ceramics I and II* for undergraduate students.
- Managed studio and kiln firing of student works.

### Textile Experience 2007-now

- Ongoing research in museum anthropology, involving research and documentation of Balinese artifacts and the study of loom technology. 2016-now.
- Study of *zari* embroidery and devotional dress making in a Hindu sect in India. 2012-2015.
- Internship at *The Fabric Workshop and Museum*, Philadelphia, 2009. Designed and produced custom screenprinted textiles, wallpaper and inks.
- Studio art and design classes in textile design at undergraduate and graduate levels.

### Publications 2010-now

#### Books, Monographs and Special Issues

- *Religion and Arts in Hindu India* in Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and the Arts (under contract).
- *Material Subject: Rethinking Subjects Through Objects*, Urmila Mohan and Laurence Douny eds., Bloomsbury (under contract).
- *Fabricating Power with Balinese Textiles*. University of Chicago Press/BGC, February 2018.
- “The Bodily and Material Cultures of Religious Subjectivation”, Urmila Mohan and Jean-Pierre Warnier eds., Special Issue of *Journal of Material Culture*, December 2017.

#### Chapters, Articles and Entries

- “Between Things and Representations: Situating Spiritual Efficacy in Two Hindu Sites” in Emily S. Clark and Rachel M. Lindsey eds. *Material Religion*, De Gruyter series on Religion and Digital Humanities (under contract).
- “Religion and Ritual: The Modern Religio-colorscape” In Anders Steinvall and Sarah Street, eds. *A Cultural History of Color in the Modern Age*, London: Bloomsbury (forthcoming).
- Mohan, Urmila. 2018. “Objecthood” In Hillary Callan, ed. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Mohan, Urmila and Jean-Pierre Warnier. 2017. “Editorial: Marching the Devotional Subject: The Bodily-and-Material Cultures of Religion.” *Journal of Material Culture* 22(4): 369-384.
- 2017. “Clothing as a Technology of Enchantment: Gaze and Glaze in Hindu Garments” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 12(1): 225-244.
- 2017. “When Krishna Wore a Kimono: Deity Clothing as Rupture and Inefficacy”, In Timothy Carroll, David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Julie Shackelford, eds. *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong*, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 39-55.
- 2016. “From Prayer Beads to the Mechanical Counter: The Negotiation of Chanting Practices Within a Hindu Group” *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 174:191-212.
- 2015. “Dressing God: Clothing as Material of Religious Subjectivity in a Hindu Group”, In Susanne Küchler and Adam Drazin eds., *The Social Life of Materials: Studies in Materials and Society*, London: Bloomsbury, 137-152.

#### Reviews and Essays

- Mohan, Urmila. 2019. “The Power of Fabrication: Reflections on Curating Balinese Textiles.” *Material Religion* 15(1).
- Mohan, Urmila and Courtney O’Dell-Chaib. 2018. “Curatorial Authority in Digital Scholarship: A Review of ‘Materializing the Bible’.” *American Anthropologist* (Multimodal Anthropologies) 120(2).
- Mohan, Urmila. 2017. “Review of Lamak. Ritual Objects in Bali, by Francine Brinkgreve.” *Anthropos* 112(2): 647-648.
- Mohan, Urmila. 2017. “Looms are good to think with!” Bard Graduate Center (Online Research Forum), [www.bgc.bard.edu/research-forum/articles/187/fellows-talk](http://www.bgc.bard.edu/research-forum/articles/187/fellows-talk)

- Mohan, Urmila. 2015. “Productive (Dis)orientation: Being Made and Unmade in the Field”, *Anthropology News* (Society for Humanistic Anthropology), AAA.
- Mohan, Urmila. 2011. “Designing Diaspora: The Culture of Indian Diasporic Clothing”, *The Trellis*, National Institute of Design, India.

**Awards**  
2010-2016

- 2018-19 Asian Cultural Council, Individual Fellowship grant of \$17,500 for travel and research on textiles in Indonesia (Bali and Java).
- 2018 Coby Foundation grant of \$40,000 for BGC exhibit on Balinese textiles.
- 2016-18 AMNH-BGC Postdoctoral Fellowship in Museum Anthropology, NY, US. Support for curating an exhibit and developing the accompanying monograph/catalog.
- 2012 UCL Graduate School, Research Projects Fund Award, London.
- 2012 India Travel Award of £1,000 from Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, U.K. [www.nehrustrustvam.org/recipient/urmila-mohan](http://www.nehrustrustvam.org/recipient/urmila-mohan)
- 2011-12 Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, District 7510, NJ. Grant of \$25,000 to study at UCL.
- 2010 juried award of a solo exhibit at Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ, US.

**Languages**

- English and Hindi: Native speaker.
- Tamil, Gujarati and Bahasa Indonesia: Intermediate level.