

## DR. URMILA MOHAN

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I am an independent scholar and anthropologist of material culture and religion/belief with a background in art and design, and a commitment to studying practices of making and doing and their effects on subjects and groups. I collaborate with scholars and educators globally through my online publication *The Jugaad Project* and am associated with the *Matière à Penser* group for embodiment studies. I have researched and theorized materiality and sociality in diverse contexts including maker/religious groups in India, Indonesia, and the U.S.

Research Areas: cloth/clothing, beliefs, aesthetics, power, subject-object relationships, practices

## EDUCATION

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| <b>PhD</b> | University College London, Anthropology. London, U.K.                | 2015 |
| <b>MFA</b> | Pennsylvania State University, Studio Art. University Park, U.S.     | 2009 |
| <b>BA</b>  | Victoria University of Wellington, Anthropology, New Zealand         | 2000 |
| <b>BFA</b> | National Institute of Design, Communication Design, Ahmedabad, India | 1998 |

## PUBLICATIONS

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### ***Books – Monographs and Solely Edited***

- Mohan, U. ed. 2024. *The Efficacy of Intimacy and Belief in Worldmaking Practices*. Routledge.
- Mohan, U. 2023. *Masking in Pandemic U.S.: Practices of Containment and Connection*. Routledge.
- Mohan, U. 2019. *Clothing as Devotion in Contemporary Hinduism*. Brill.
- Mohan, U. 2018. *Fabricating Power with Balinese Textiles*. BGC/Univ. of Chicago Press.

### ***Books and Special Issues – Co-edited***

- Mohan, U. and S. Rodgers, eds. 2021. “Classification Schemes Gone Awry”, Special Issue of *Museum Anthropology*, 44(1-2).
- Mohan, U. and L. Douney, eds. 2021. *The Material Subject: Rethinking Bodies and Objects in Motion*. Routledge.
- Mohan, U. and J. -P. Warnier eds. 2017. “The Bodily and Material Cultures of Religious Subjectivation”, *Journal of Material Culture*, Special Issue 22(4).

### ***Chapters and Articles – Solely Authored***

- Mohan, U. 2024. “Introduction: Efficacious Intimacies of Worldmaking” in U. Mohan ed. *The Efficacy of Intimacy and Belief in Worldmaking Practices*, 1-23, Routledge.

- Mohan, U. 2024. "Pause, Pivot, and (Un)mask in Early Pandemic U.S." in U. Mohan ed. *The Efficacy of Intimacy and Belief in Worldmaking Practices*, 194-209, Routledge.
- Mohan, U. 2022. "Balinese Religio-Cultural Imaginaries and Rituals of Digital Materiality" in E. S. Clark and R. M. Lindsey eds. *Digital Humanities and Material Religion: An Introduction*, 111-134, De Gruyter Press.
- Mohan, U. 2021. "The Indonesian Alcove at the American Museum of Natural History: Art, Culture Areas and the Mead-Bateson Bali Project" in Mohan, U. and S. Rodgers eds. Special Issue, *Museum Anthropology* 44(1-2): 11-23.
- Mohan, U. 2021. "Religion and Ritual: The Modern Religio-colorscape" in Anders Steinvall and Sarah Street, eds. *A Cultural History of Color in the Modern Age*, 79-96, London: Bloomsbury.
- Douny, L. and U. Mohan, 2021. "Subjects, their Bodies and their Objects" in U. Mohan and L. Douny eds., *The Material Subject: Rethinking Bodies and Objects in Motion*. Routledge.
- Mohan, U. 2021. "Devotion as 'Efficacious Intimacy' on the Home Altar" in U. Mohan and L. Douny eds., *The Material Subject: Rethinking Bodies and Objects in Motion*. Routledge.
- Mohan, U. and S. Bora. 2020. "'Mask Cultures' in the United States and India" *Anthropology News* website, September 25, 2020. DOI: 10.14506/AN.1506
- Mohan, U. 2019. "Historical and Contemporary Connections Between Indian and Indonesian Textiles: A Focus on Double-Ikat Patola", *7th ASEAN Traditional Textile Symposium*, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- Mohan, U. 2018. "Objecthood" in H. Callan, ed. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Mohan, U. and J. -P. Warnier. 2017. "Editorial: Marching the Devotional Subject: The Bodily-and-Material Cultures of Religion." *Journal of Material Culture* 22(4): 369-384.
- Mohan, U. 2017. "When Krishna Wore a Kimono: Deity Clothing as Rupture and Inefficacy", in T. Carroll, et al, eds. *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong*, Routledge, 39-55.
- Mohan, U. 2017. "Clothing as a Technology of Enchantment: Gaze and Glaze in Hindu Garments" *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 12(1): 225-244.
- Mohan, U. 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.
- Mohan, U. 2015. "Dressing God: Clothing as Material of Religious Subjectivity in a Hindu Group", in S. Küchler and A. Drazin eds., *The Social Life of Materials: Studies in Materials and Society*, Routledge, 137-152.

### ***Reviews and Essays – Solely Authored***

- Mohan, U. 2019. "The Power of Fabrication: Reflections on Curating Balinese Textiles." *Material Religion* 15(1).
- Mohan, U. 2017. "Review of Lamak. Ritual Objects in Bali, by Francine Brinkgreve." *Anthropos* 112(2): 647-648.
- Mohan, U. 2017. "Looms are good to think with!" Bard Graduate Center Online Research.
- Mohan, U. 2015. "Productive (Dis)orientation: Being Made and Unmade in the Field", *Anthropology News* (Society for Humanistic Anthropology), AAA.

- Mohan, U. 2011. “Designing Diaspora: The Culture of Indian Diasporic Clothing”, *The Trellis (Design and Research)*, 2(7): 52-58.
- Mohan, U. 2010. “Moving Home”, Exhibition Catalog, Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ.
- Mohan, U. 2008. “Slonim Revisited: Images of Home in Emmett Leader’s Art”, *Ceramics Art & Perception*.
- Mohan, U. 2007. “Laying the Foundation for a New Tradition: Japanese Contemporary Ceramics”, *Terracotta Online Magazine*.

### ***Theses***

- Mohan, U. 2015. *Dressing (for) God: Clothing as Efficacious Intimacy in Iskcon*. PhD Dissertation in Socio-Cultural Anthropology, University College London.
- Mohan, U. 2009. *Skin Deep - Body, Embodiment and Clothing*. MFA Thesis in Studio Art, Pennsylvania State University.
- Mohan, U. 1998. *Aliens in Their Own Land* (A film on cultural change among the tribal Rathwas in Gujarat told through their Pithoro wall paintings), Video, 20 mins., Undergraduate Thesis in Communication Design, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India.

## **RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND WORK EXPERIENCE**

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### **Founder and Managing Editor**, The Jugaad Project, 2014 – now

- Managed volunteer editorial team/working group of scholars and curators since 2014 (formerly the Material Religion Blog) and developed core vision for this interdisciplinary, open access publication connecting Global North and South. [thejugaadproject.pub](http://thejugaadproject.pub)
- Held virtual workshops for authors (2020-23) during the pandemic, and built hopeful relationships to edit and publish a critically-acclaimed edited volume on efficacious practices (Routledge 2024).
- Expanded material culture studies by soliciting cutting-edge scholarship and editing issues on topics such as craft, work, museums, activism, healing, rebuilding, translocality, and innovation.
- Incorporated analytical approaches from scholars and artists with a focus on practices and lived experiences. Emphasized the need for diversity and innovation in material culture studies.
- Designed and maintained site and associated social media, and organized events.

### **Postdoctoral Fellow**, Museum Anthropology, AMNH-BGC (American Museum of Natural History and Bard Graduate Center), 2016 – 18. Project titled “Fabricating Power with Balinese Textiles”.

- Researched textile fabrication, design, and actions, and how these relate to cultural and spiritual values.
- Curated exhibit on Balinese textiles (February 23 – July 8, 2018) along with authoring accompanying publication, and providing content for interactive media component illustrating ritual uses of textiles.
- Fieldwork in Bali, Indonesia over Summer 2016. Artifactual and archival research in the Asian Ethnographic Collection at American Museum of Natural History, Nyc; Library of Congress, D.C.; and Tropenmuseum, Netherlands.

- Designed and taught Masters courses in Balinese history, exhibit curation and analysis. 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.

**Honorary Research Fellow**, University College London (UCL), 2016 – now

- Editing and publication of ‘The Material Subject’. A pathbreaking edited volume featuring a compilation of work by earlier and newer members of the *Matière à Penser* working group on material culture and subjectivation.
- Peer-reviewer for the *Journal of Material Culture*.

**Other Curatorial, Museum, and Work Experience**, 2007 – now

- Co-curator with J. Hughes, Open University, London. *The Color of Memory – Claire Le Pape’s ‘Giottoesques’*, The Jugaad Project, Dec. 2020.
- Guest Curator, *Fabricating Power with Balinese Textiles*, Bard Graduate Center, New York. 2016-18.
- Documented South Asian artifacts in the Natalie Tolbert Collection, *Horniman Museum and Gardens*, London as part of “Collections, People, Stories: Anthropology Reconsidered.” 2013.
- Co-curated with J. Reese, *India: A Veneration Nation*, Symposium Exhibit, University College London, June 2012.
- Developed and taught module on “Society, Culture and Technology” for first year design students at Srishti College of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, India in course titled *How to Think About Things: An Introduction to Material Culture*. 2013
- Workshop on using the methodological/analytical tool of the *chaîne opératoire* as an ethnographic technique for undergraduate and postgraduate graphic design students. NID, Ahmedabad, India. 2013.
- Independent Artist, 2010–2011.
- Internship in Fabric Printmaking, Fabric Workshop & Museum, Philadelphia, September–December 2009.
- Summer Art Teacher, East Orange Cultural Center, East Orange, NJ. July–August 2009.
- Summer Intensive Workshop in Fabric Printmaking, Fabric Workshop & Museum, Philadelphia. May–June 2009.
- Instructor of Record, Teaching Assistant and Studio Technician, Ceramic Department, PSU, University Park. August 2007–May 2009.

**Adjunct Instructor**, Dept. of Anthropology, New York University (NYU)

- Taught undergraduate courses on material/visual culture and history in museums (2020-23).
- Focused on museum collecting, display, and representation as forms of power through a postcolonial lens.
- Introduced modules on archives and civic engagement as generative sites in museums.
- Initiated 2021 NYU Libraries public panel and connected community activists and archivists.

**Adjunct Instructor**, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NYU, Spring 2019

- Developed and taught an undergraduate course on the history and anthropology of textiles and religion in South Asia.

- Focused on material/visual culture and study of history through museum objects/ archives.

## TALKS AND PANELS

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### Invited Talks and Discussions, 2015 – now

- “Contextualizing and Curating Balinese Textiles”, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India, February 1, 2024.
- “Brand Storytelling”, Communication Design Dept., Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia, September 26, 2023.
- “Co-creating and Bricolage Among Mask Stitchers in the U.S. Pandemic”, Keynote Speaker, Bandung Creative Movement Conference, Telkom Univ., Bandung, Indonesia, June 8, 2023.
- “Patola-inspired Textiles in Indonesia as Forms of Spiritual Power”, Keynote Speaker, Society for Art and Cultural Heritage of India (SACHI), April 10, 2022.
- “Silk Road Textiles in Korea and Japan: History of Collecting”, Discussant for talk by Dr. Kyunghye Pyun, MS Visvesvaraya – Okakura Tenshin Lecture Series, Japanese Studies India, October 30, 2021.
- “Where do Design and Anthropology Meet?”, Keynote Speaker, Design Culture Lab, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Solo, Indonesia, October 23, 2021.
- “Final Preparation”, Panelist in discussion on preparing journal publications, Florida State University, Department of Religion, May 7, 2021.
- “Reflections on Curating Balinese Textiles”, Keynote Speaker, *Material Histories of the Indian Ocean World*, George Mason University’s Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, April 22, 2021.
- *Traditional Textiles to Contemporary Construction in Fashion*, Webinar organized by Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Denpasar, Bali, October 2020. Speaker in this international webinar for the public and students in the institute’s fashion design program.
- “Historical and Contemporary Connections between Indian and Indonesian Textiles”, 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Traditional Textile Symposium, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, Nov. 6, 2019.
- “Producing Anthropological Knowledge: Reflections on Themes and Methods”, Keynote Speaker, Oct. 17, 2019, Narsee Monjee University, Mumbai, India.
- “Contemporary Uses of Images in Bali, Indonesia”, Keynote Speaker, *Gatty Lecture Series*, Organized by Cornell University, Ithaca, Feb. 14, 2019.
- “Cultural Conversation with Urmila Mohan”, *Asian Cultural Center*, New York, June 4, 2019. An overview of my research as ACC awardee on Indonesian textiles.
- *Future Textiles Panel*, Organized by Wearable Media Studio, Oct. 27, 2017, New York. Panelist on how design shapes our surroundings through clothing, culture, and technology.
- “Ornament as a Technology of Devotional ‘Gaze’ and ‘Glaze’ in Hindu Deity Garments”, Presented paper in *Material Religion Conference*, Sept. 10, 2015, Duke University.

### Organization of Events, Panels and Workshops, 2012 – now

- “Evaluating Creativity: Between Commodity and Everyday Repertoire”, Co-organized with J. Bielo, Panel at American Anthropological Association (AAA), D.C. November 18, 2021.
- “Documenting a Crisis as it Unfolds”, Panel co-organizer with NYU Libraries, March 22, 2021.

- “Efficacious Intimacy – Creating Dialogs Between Material Culture and Belief”, Organized Zoom working group meetings with global scholars hosted by *The Jugaad Project*. December 2020-21.
- Virtual Book Release Event for *The Material Subject* featuring panelists from UK and Europe in dialog with a global audience. January 12, 2021.
- “Bali and Beyond: Culture, Power, and Indonesian Textiles”, Organized Symposium Panel, February 2018, Bard Graduate Center, Nyc.
- “Borders and Boundaries: Politics of Mobility in Museum Settings”, Co-organized with Claire Heckel, Panel at American Anthropological Association (AAA), D.C. November 2017.
- “The Bodily AND Material Cultures of Religious Subjectivation” Co-organized with Jean-Pierre Warnier, Professor of Anthropology (retired), University Paris-Cité. A two-day conference at UCL, London, on the role of materials and techniques in making the religious subject. June 2014.
- “Material and Sensory Attachment: Intimate Engagement in Religion and Politics”, Co-organized with A. Cohen, Panel at American Anthropological Association (AAA), D.C. December 2014.
- “Bodies of Veneration: Motion and Change as Devotional Aspects in India”, Organized panel for 12<sup>th</sup> EASR Annual Conference/BASR, Liverpool Hope University, September 2013.
- “The Culture of Ornament & Decoration”, PSU, November 2008. Initiated and organized this Symposium with international and US speakers from studio art and craft fields.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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- Asian Cultural Council Individual Fellowship, 2018. Funding for 6 months of research on textiles in Indonesia.
- British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), Conference Bursary, 2013.
- 2012 UCL Graduate School, Research Projects Fund Award, London.
- India Travel Award, 2012. Funding from Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections, Victoria & Albert Museum, for 1 year of doctoral fieldwork in India.
- Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, 2011–12. Grant for 1 year of study at UCL.
- 2010 solo exhibit at Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ, US.

## AFFILIATIONS

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- *Museum Anthropology*, Journal of the Council for Museum Anthropology. Board Member. 2023-2026.
- *Textile Society of America*. Member.
- *Sociology of Religion* (a British Sociology Association group). Member.

## LANGUAGES

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Hindi: Advanced Listener/Speaker, Intermediate Reader/Writer  
 Gujarati: Intermediate Listener, Beginner Speaker/Reader/Writer  
 Bahasa Indonesia: Intermediate Listener/Speaker, Beginner Reader/Writer  
 English: Native fluency as Listener/Speaker/Reader/Writer