

# Susan Hobbs

Surabhi Ghosh

## Biography

- 1980 Born in Houston, TX  
2004 Master of Fine Art, Fiber Department, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
2002 Bachelor of Fine Art, Studio Art and Fabric Design, University of Georgia, Athens, GA

## Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 *Le poids de nos mythes / The weight of our myths*, Maison des Arts de Laval, Laval, Quebec  
2022 *What's mine is yours*, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown  
2021 *Band, Bond, Bend, and Bind*, Hawthorn Contemporary, Milwaukee  
2019 *Margins, Material & Metaphor, with Olivia Valentine*, Heaven Gallery, Chicago  
2017 *Ananta Undone*, FOFA Gallery, Concordia University, Montréal  
*Garlanding & Guise*, SPACE Gallery, Portland  
2015 *Ananta Undone*, Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon  
2014 *Tiled & Looped*, Manifold Gallery, Chicago  
*Tile Up*, Culture Room, Brooklyn  
2013 *Fields*, Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon  
2012 *Proofs*, The Bike Room, Chicago  
*In Circles*, SideCar Gallery, Hammond, Indiana  
2011 *Surabhi Ghosh & Leslie Baum*, Lula's Walls, Chicago  
2008 *Outside In*, Lillstreet Art Center, Chicago  
2002 *Constant: being*, Courtyard Gallery, University of Georgia, Athens

## Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2022 *Sculpture as Verb*, Gund Gallery, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio  
*La Machine qui enseignait des airs aux oiseaux*, Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, Montréal  
2019 *Threads*, Stewart Hall Art Gallery, Pointe-Claire, Quebec  
2016 *Everything has been material for scissors to shape*, Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, Seattle  
*Surabhi Ghosh, Rowland Ricketts, and Michael Andrews*, Duke Hall Gallery, Harrisonburg, Virginia  
2014 *Fontana Mix: Loop*, Autzen Gallery, Portland State University, Portland  
2013 *Object Focus: The Bowl*, Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland  
*Dumb Angel*, 12128 Boatspace, Portland

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- Delgado, Jérôme. *Se frotter à l'art, en vrai*. [Le Devoir](http://LeDevoir.com), February 2021;
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- Lasky, Julie. *Finally, the Bowl Gets its Due*. [The New York Times](http://TheNewYorkTimes.com), March 2013;
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- Mertens, Robert. *Cosmology in Repeat*. [Surface Design Journal](http://SurfaceDesignJournal.com) 42, no. 1, 2018;
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- Platt, Susan Noyes. *Everything has been Material for Scissors to Shape*. [Art Access](http://ArtAccess.com), November 2016;
- Sinner, Lauren. *Everything has been Material for Scissors to Shape*. [Surface Design Association](http://SurfaceDesignAssociation.com). August 2016;
- Vincent, Ruth. *Wing Luke exhibit showcases textiles in human life*. [International Examiner](http://InternationalExaminer.com), August 2016;

## 34. Surabhi Ghosh. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

September 29, 2020

Surabhi Ghosh is an artist based in Montreal, Quebec, where she is also Associate Professor of Fibres & Material Practices in the Department of Studio Arts at Concordia University. She uses textiles, patterning, and site-responsive installations to materialize contradictory narratives based in her own experiences, while analyzing the relations between materials, objects, and their contested cultural meanings. In her recent work, she investigates the transmission of culture and nationalist ideology between her three “homelands” of India, the United States, and Canada.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise*, 2017, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, tape, 159 x 109 x 40 in. Photo: Joel Tsui. Image courtesy of the artist.

**First, and most importantly, how are you doing? How are you navigating the highs and lows? Where are you physically?**

I'm doing OK, lots of ups and downs! It's been tricky to find self-discipline and create a new routine. Mostly I feel incredibly fortunate to have a secure income and home, and I'm appreciating every little thing more than ever before.

I'm in Tiohtià:ke / Mooniyang / Montréal / Montreal, where I've lived since 2014. I'm lucky to have a studio in my apartment—it's a bit small, but at the moment, I'm so glad my commute to the studio is just a flight of stairs.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise* (detail), 2017, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, tape, 159 x 109 x 40 in. Photo: Joel Tsui. Image courtesy of the artist.

It's my experience that most artists engage with some level of self-isolation in their day to day art practice. Has this been your experience? And if so, have you found these innate rhythms to be helpful during this larger, world-wide experience of isolation?

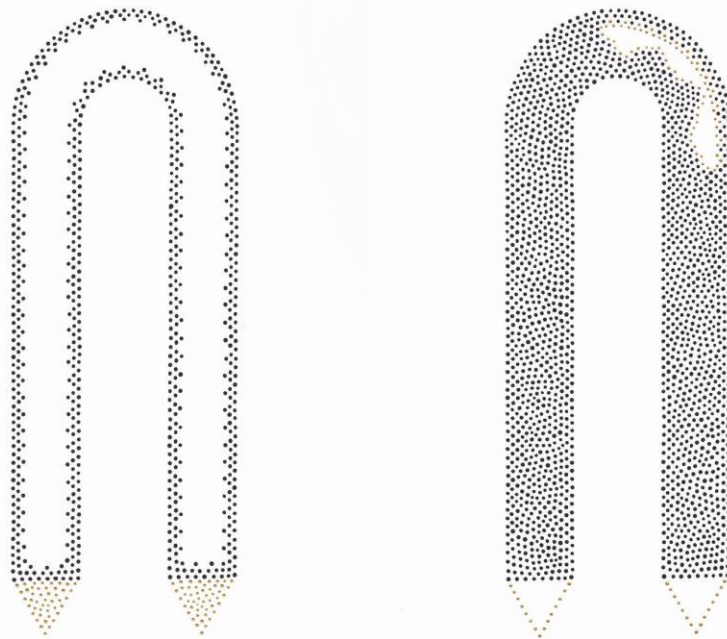
Yes, I have always worked most productively when I'm alone in the studio. A lot of my time is spent working with groups of people, whether colleagues or students, so I've always tried to carve out and protect my studio time, which is also alone time. I've had more time recently, but the mental space has been pretty hard to find.

Before the pandemic, I had also been loving weekly studio sessions with three of my favorite people, also my studio assistants, all of whom are very skilled artists: [Gisèle Suzor-Morin](#), [Amélie Bélanger](#), and [Elena Hoh](#). As we wrapped up our last meeting on March 12, I worried we might not be able to meet for a few weeks. As the weeks turned into months, we ended up mailing things back and forth, tracking our inventory online, checking in on the phone ... and thanks to this incredible team, two major projects were completed over the past 6 months. Well, except for the actual installations.



Two-page spread from publication "Garlanding & Guise" (2019). Book design and altered comic book panels by Surabhi Ghosh. Imagery sourced from *Draupadi*, Amar Chitra Katha, no. 542. Image courtesy of the artist.





Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding #3*, 2019, acrylic gouache on vellum, 14 x 17 inches. From the ongoing *Garlandings* series. Image courtesy of the artist.

**It would be great if you could briefly talk us through your practice. Understanding it is integral to appreciating the multivalence of your work.**

Yes, here's to multivalence! My practice is rooted in fibres; another term could be something like material mark-making. Some days I think of myself as a storyteller, working in a long lineage of artists and ancestors. I prioritize using familiar and accessible tools, like needle and thread or a pair of scissors; I don't want viewers to get too stuck on the "how" questions instead of the "whys" and "what ifs." I also work with the book format, and recently I've been writing more too.

My overarching interests are in: (1) narratives (the ones told or transmitted to me and the ones I tell with my work), and (2) patterning (the result of a series of repetitive actions that is then transmitted as a message). Even more broadly, I could describe it as a curiosity about language. Currently I'm driven by a motivating series of questions about repetitive, recurring, or cyclical narratives. Who is allowed to tell what stories and to whom? What stories get told and retold over time and distance—and how are they transmitted via material-objects? Why are some stories more impactful or more valued than others? What is the intent of the storyteller? How can and





Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise* (detail), 2017, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, tape, 159 x 109 x 40 in.  
Photo: Joel Tsui. Image courtesy of the artist.

**Has any of your imagery shifted in a reflection to what's currently happening? And why, or why not?**

No, not so far, but I may have found new layers of potential meaning in my imagery and forms. I hope that viewers may also find new resonance in the work too. My work may appear to be quite controlled, mathematical, and rational, but it is also based in raw emotional responses—so I wonder if audience interpretations will shift at all. For example, some people might be thinking about their relationship to measurements, numbers, and statistical data in a new way, as they concurrently grapple with intense feelings of worry, grief, anger, disorientation—will this experience affect how they perceive the incremental patterns and units + the grief and anger in my work?

Since 2016, I've focused on recurring uses of language or motif during periods of increased nationalist rhetoric or spectacle, like right now. So, for example, the forms I'm referencing in my work (garlands, necklaces, arched gateways, doorways, *toran*) reflect my ongoing preoccupation with the language that is wielded subtly (or not) to unite and divide the body politic. Over time, through repetitive reinforcement, fears become "our values," a burden that is carried in and on "our" bodies and passed from one generation to the next. But I seek potentials for breaking cycles, without disrespecting the past.

My "Garlanding" pieces explore many themes, but central is a narrative of living in the face of tragedy. My title *Garlanding & Guise* refers to the coopting of cultural signifiers, like the Hindu flower garland, for political spectacles in (Hindu supremacist) India and (white supremacist) North America—in other words, the ideological manipulation of the political body, via the perversion of something with deep and layered meaning (spiritual, familial, intimate, embodied) into a visual prop for nationalist performances, enabling yet another resurgence of racism, xenophobia, classism, ableism, misogyny. So no, nothing has changed in my work, but potentially viewers will be more attuned to the sense of urgency the work already had for me.

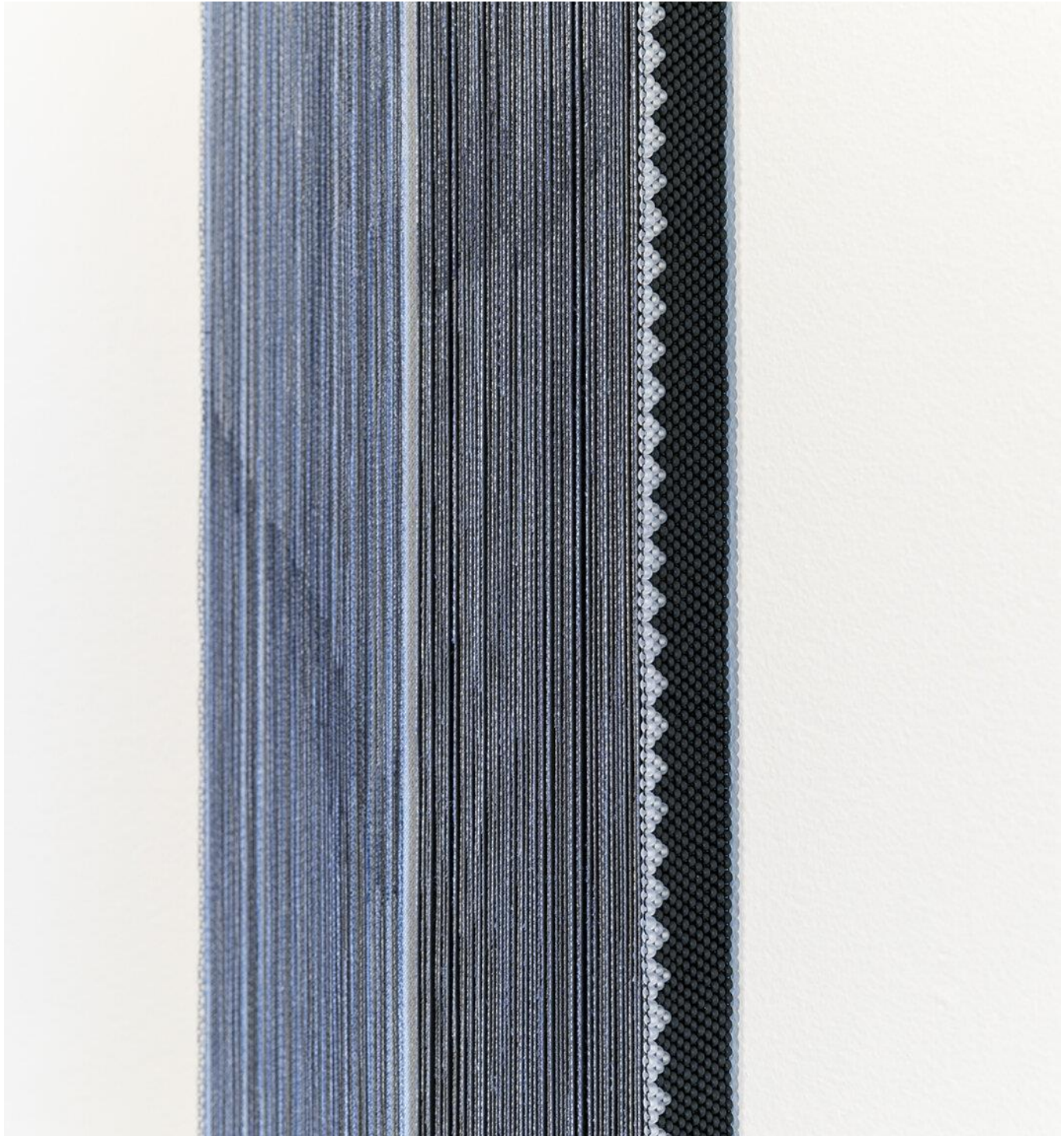




Mirabai endpaper design for publication titled "Garlanding & Guise" (2019).  
Pattern design and altered imagery by Surabhi Ghosh. Image sourced from  
*Mirabai*, Amar Chitra Katha, no. 36. Image courtesy of the artist.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Layering*, 2019, upholstery vinyl, ink, screws, tape, glass beads, thread, 66 x 72 x 1 inches  
Photo: Robert Chase Heishman. Image courtesy of the artist.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Layering* (details), 2019, upholstery vinyl, ink, screws, tape, glass beads, thread, 66 x 72 x 1 in. Photo: DPM. Image courtesy of the artist.

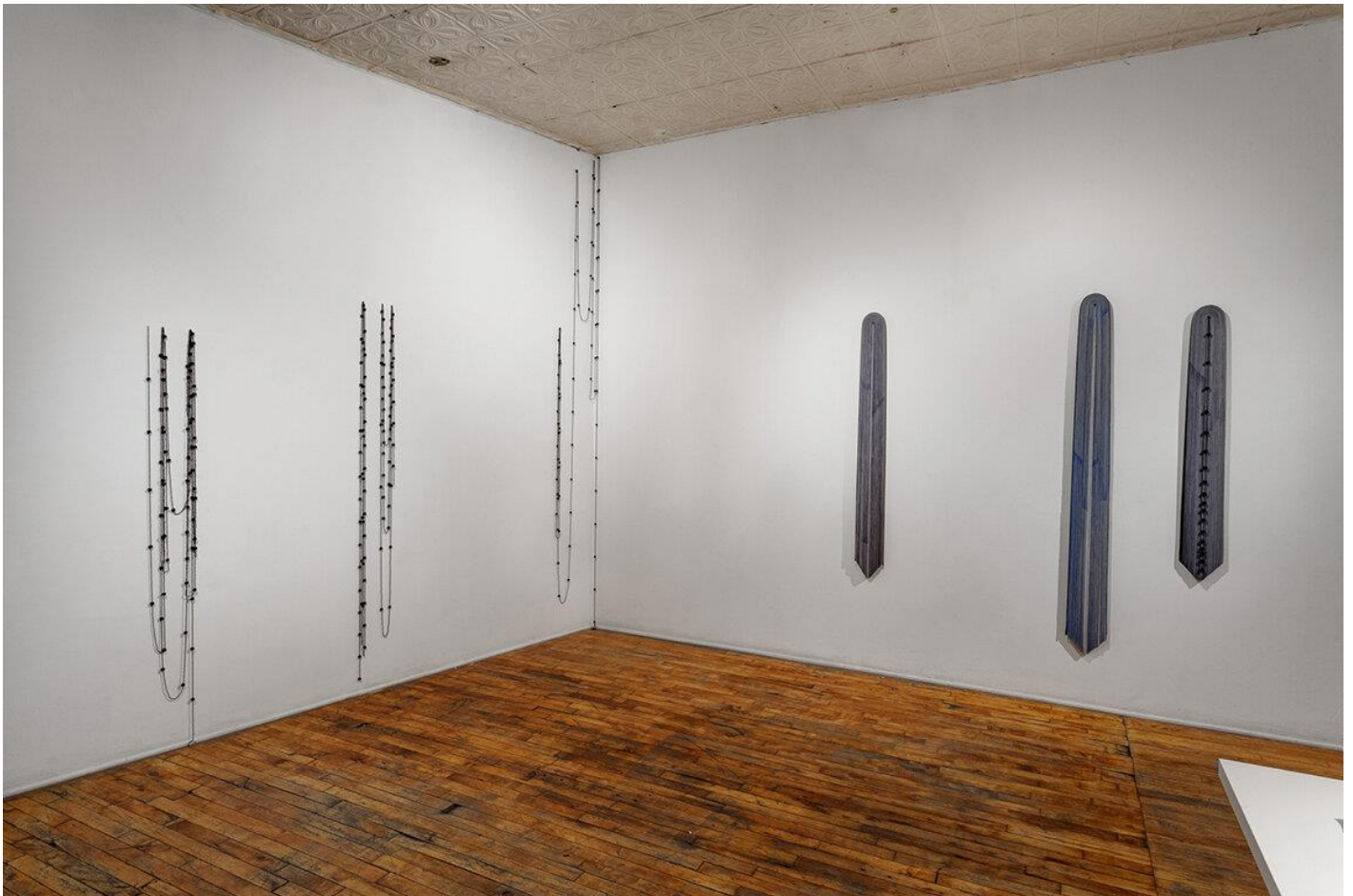
**Are you thinking differently? Coping differently? Inspired differently?**

As I've been working over the past months, I've reflected on my past, current, and future work, both as an artist and a teacher. I'm not yet sure where I'm going next, but I'm definitely feeling the urge to rearticulate some of my driving principles.



It's really important for me to think about art-making as a highly deliberate act, a series of decisions, and a process of call-and-response within the time and space I inhabit—not passively but actively! Every stitch to add a single seed bead into a sculpture is a deliberate action, a visual/material assertion I transmit into the cultural realm. I use formal language to inspire curiosity, which potentially leads to critical thinking. Mirroring what happens during my creation process, I aim to project questions and critical speculation rather than definitive statements. Does your interpretation shift depending on how you move your body around the bounded space of a gallery? What does it mean to “look at” versus “look up at” or “look down at” something? I think talking about subjectivity, positionality, visual literacy, or just critical analysis in general is crucial right now.

I'm in the last phase of finishing a new project and preparing to install it at Montreal's Museum of Contemporary Art in [a very thoughtfully curated group exhibition](#). This new work-in-progress has definitely taken me in a new direction, which I can't fully understand until it's actually up on the wall, but I'm excited to follow this trajectory in the next months. My title is *Taken in, taking on*; hopefully viewers can start their interpretations by spending time with the piece while wondering: what does it mean to be “taken in” by something vs. by someone, and what does it mean to “take on” something vs. someone?



Surabhi Ghosh, (Left) *What's mine is yours*, 2019, glass beads, thread, steel pins, variable dimensions; (Right) *Layering*, 2019, upholstery vinyl, ink, screws, tape, glass beads, thread. Installation view, Heaven Gallery, Chicago, IL. Photo: Robert Chase Heishman. Image courtesy of the artist.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Dispossess* (detail), 2019, glass beads, thread, variable dimensions. Installation view at Stewart Hall Art Gallery, Pointe-Claire, QC, Canada. Photo: DPM. Image courtesy of the artist.

### **What research or writing are you doing that you find compelling? Are you reading anything?**

My primary form of research is making art, and I find new potentials every day. I'm finishing some beaded pieces and drawing a lot these days.

Just before the pandemic, I wrote a sort-of poem for [Anne Wilson's new publication project](#), which was made as a companion piece to her recent solo exhibition, *Anne Wilson: If We Asked about the Sky*, at [Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago](#). Writing that piece after a generative back-and-forth process with Anne was really meaningful for me, and I keep going back to it, which means that writing it was research for something else.

And yes, I'm reading far too many things! Here are some examples from my current pile:

*Work: The Last 1,000 Years* (2018), by Andrea Komlosy.

*The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), by Lisa Lowe.

*The Great Indian Novel* (1989), by Shashi Tharoor.

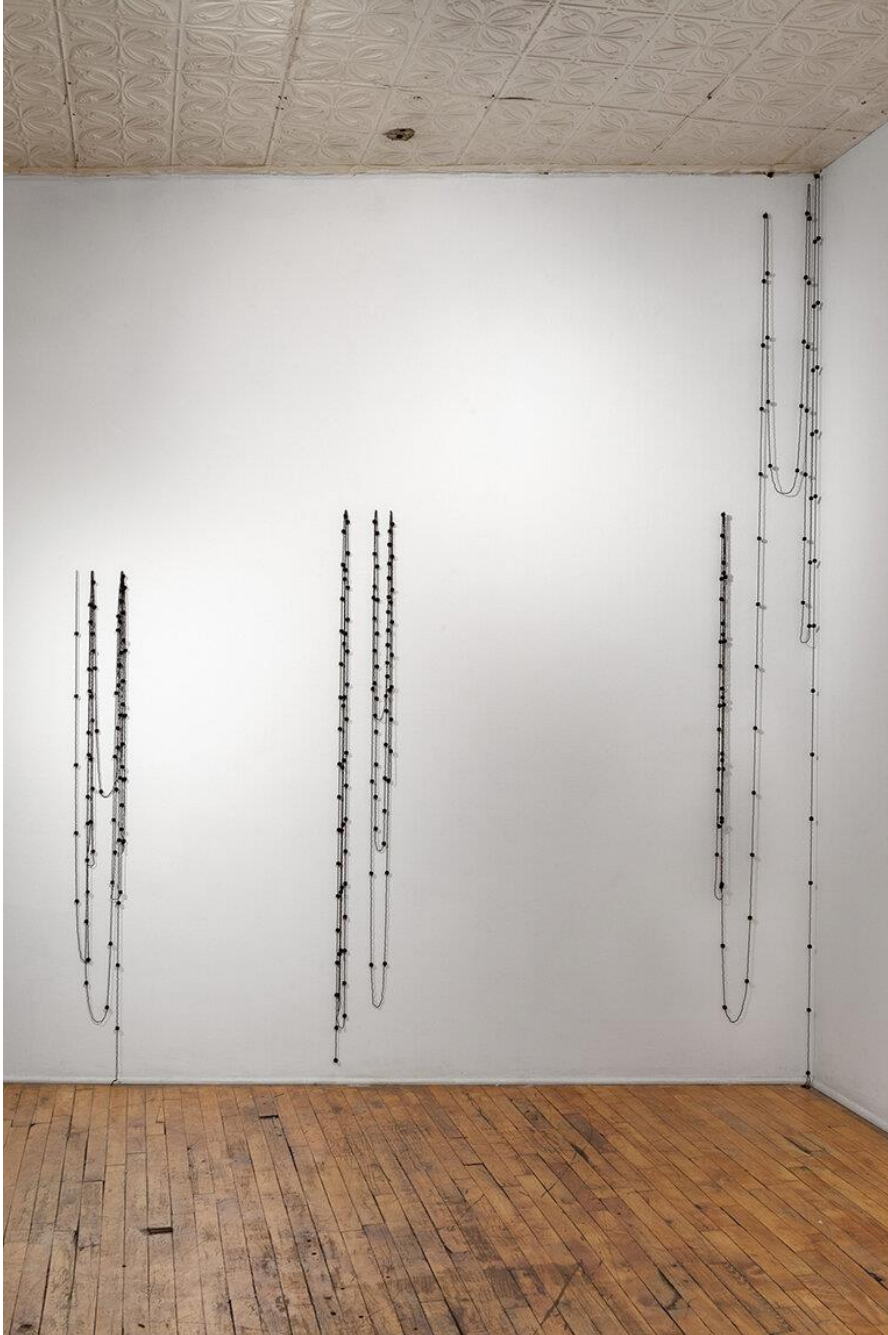
*Poetics of Relation* (1990/1997), by Édouard Glissant.



*Metaphors We Live By*(1980), by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in combination with *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*(2005), by Zoltán Kövecses.

*The Racial Contract*(1997), by Charles W. Mills (thanks to Adam Serwer's essay in *The Atlantic*, "The Coronavirus Was an Emergency Until Trump Found Out Who Was Dying").

*A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism*(2007), by Prema Kurien.



Surabhi Ghosh, *What's mine is yours*, 2019, glass beads, thread, steel pins.  
Installation view at Heaven Gallery, Chicago, IL. Photo: Robert Chase Heishman.  
Image courtesy of the artist.

**What is bringing you solace, or even joy, in this moment?**

In my practice? Imbibing the work of POC artists and thinkers in all forms: art, theory, journalism, TV, film, music, podcasts, videos, and even social media.

Or in my home life? My partner and our daily conversations and debates. My kitty. The terrace on our roof. The recently repaired air conditioner. Buying local and eating summertime produce. The blockprinted Gujarati textiles that we use throughout the apartment, clashing colors and patterns in all their glory! Working on my Canadian citizenship application.



Studio panorama from summer 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.



## "Patterns tell stories, if one is interested in listening" : A Conversation With Surabhi Ghosh

I first encountered the work of [Surabhi Ghosh](#) at [SPACE Gallery](#) in Portland, Maine last fall, where her window installation [Garlanding & Guise](#) was prominently featured. I was captivated—it was elegant, sensuous, and minimal. That same weekend, I had the opportunity to attend a brief patterning workshop led by Ghosh at [Able Baker Contemporary](#). Feeling a little shy, and trying not to monopolize the conversation during the short workshop, I failed to ask so many of the things I wanted to. I went home and studied Ghosh's work online. Months later, I worked up the nerve to ask her if she'd be willing to answer a few questions. I'm thrilled she said yes. Here's our conversation:



Installation view: Surabhi Ghosh, *Ananta Undone*, FOFA Gallery, Montreal, QC, 2017.  
Photo: Guy L'Heureux



**Liz Miller:** While pattern and repetition are obviously part of your work, I would not necessarily characterize your work as decorative. Tell me a little bit about how pattern/repetition/decoration figure into your work.

**Surabhi Ghosh:** This is huge—I could (and do) speak for a long time about this! Everything I've ever made can be broken down into two components and the relationship between them: patterning and storytelling. Visual patterning is a language with an extensive vocabulary and a complex organizational structure. Patterns tell stories, if one is interested in listening. I've spent several years studying pattern and creating patterns. In some pieces, I emphasize the "repetition" behind pattern more than visual pattern itself. But pattern and repetition are always part of my work.



Installation view: Surabhi Ghosh, *Ananta Undone*, FOFA Gallery, Montreal, QC, 2017. Photo: Guy L'Heureux

The word “decorative” is loaded with multiple meanings and cultural connotations, some of which are contradictory, which is what makes it worth grappling with. My choice to use that word comes from an urge to acknowledge it and claim it as a powerful visual language that often speaks “from the margins”—and to claim the periphery as a significant place for speaking and listening.

My larger interest here is in the demarginalization of narratives that “trouble” the dominant ones. What does it mean to do this in the western contemporary art context? For me it started by paying attention to the qualifiers we use—*fine* art versus *folk* art or *decorative* art; *contemporary* art versus *traditional* art; *primitive* art, *textile* art, etc.—and acknowledging that these words indicate a hierarchical value system. An alternative model is one where all makers and forms are equally valid. Decorative patterning is full of meaning; textiles are full of meaning; the margins and edges of spaces (cultural spaces, institutional spaces, art spaces, etc.) are important.





Installation view: Surabhi Ghosh, *Ananta Undone*, FOFA Gallery, Montreal, QC, 2017. Photo: Guy L'Heureux

**Liz Miller:** Your installations are also minimal—they seem as much about absence as presence, and as much about deconstruction as construction. There is a concision and specificity that I find really appealing. Can you speak a bit about your work's relationship to minimalism?

**Surabhi Ghosh:** Yes! I'm thrilled that you picked up on some of the (seemingly) oppositional ideas that I am most drawn to, especially when I make aesthetic decisions. These ideas aren't opposites or contradictions. They are interdependent concepts—things we define and understand in relation to each other. Minimal and decorative might be another pair. What I find myself doing more and more with each piece is searching for conflicting ideas and then trying to figure out if they can both stay, if I can find the exact right amount of tension for the whole thing to hold together and survive, both physically and conceptually. Usually something fails, and that's how I find my way to the next piece.

One of my recurring questions is: How can I make a piece with precision and specificity that is also unbounded and sprawling? For example, if I make an exact one-inch incision every inch along the width of a bolt of a sturdy, functional material like upholstery vinyl, what messy chaos spills out from the process, or the resulting form, or observations from others? The minimal intervention, the controlled mark making, the measured repetition, all of these formal devices hopefully make way for their *apparent opposite*: a loud messy pile of chaos.

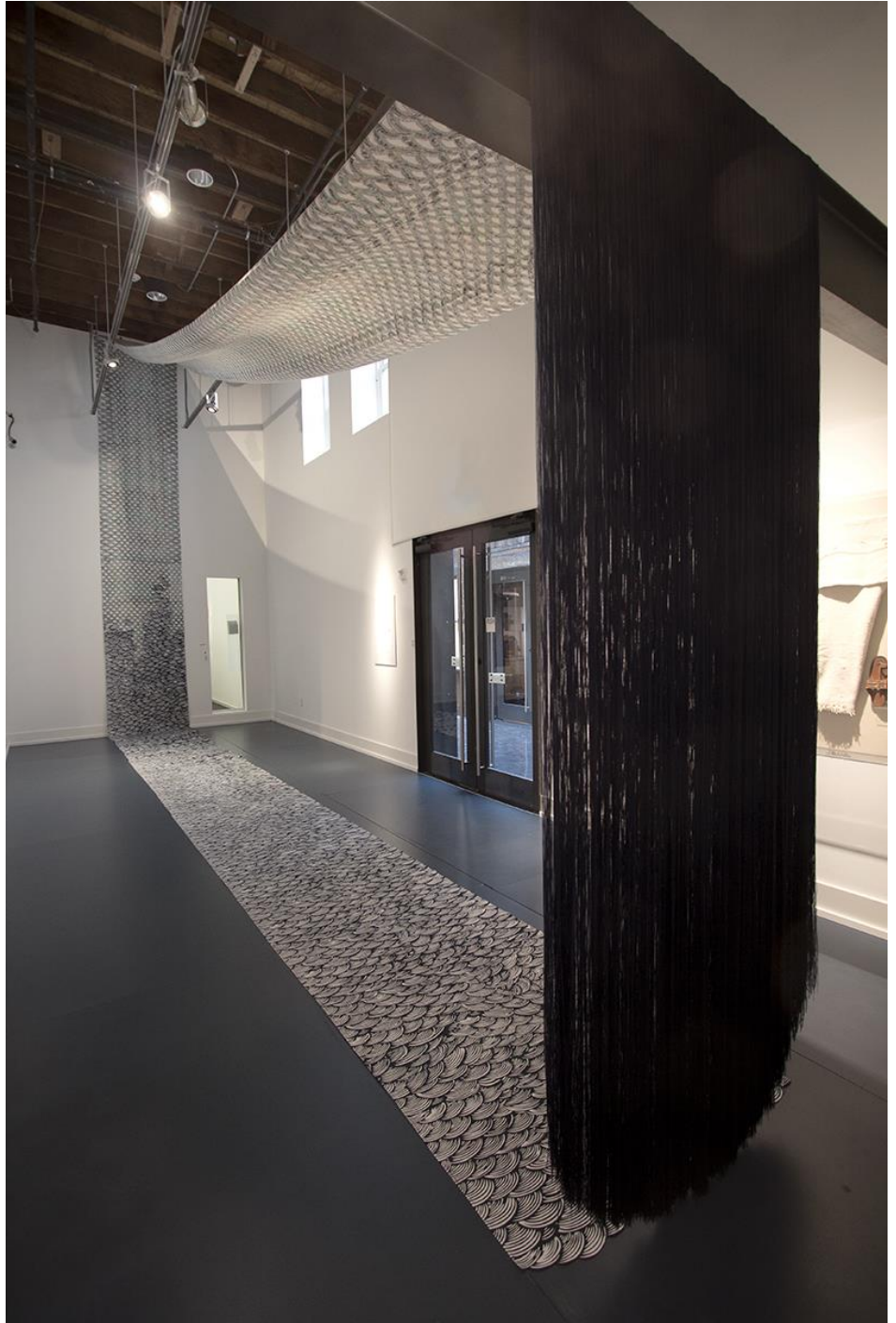
The work of some of my favorite artists can be categorized as minimalist or post-minimalist, and I'm definitely building on these aesthetic and conceptual foundations. For example, here are a few artists that provided me with some "ah ha!" moments: Fred Sandback (a material line in space), Eva Hesse (difference in repetition through material behavior), Robert Morris (draped lines and planes), Anish Kapoor (curved forms and non-

reflective color), Tara Donovan (transformation through repetition), Richard Serra (“Drawing is a verb”), Robert Irwin (subjectivity of perception), Yayoi Kusama (repetition and reflection) and most importantly, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who I’m pretty sure figured out everything that I’m trying to figure out and much more (saying so much with so little; an unbounded concision; meaning is not fixed and is made by all of us together; identifying the point where critical analysis and emotion meet [our bodies]). I also had the privilege of working with three incredible artist-mentors who taught me more than I can explain, and whose works also relate to post-minimalism: [Jane Lackey](#), [Joan Livingstone](#), and [Anne Wilson](#).

But I also grew up in a household full of South Asian visual art, especially textile-based objects. For me, these were (and continue to be) equally important sources to learn from. The “everyday” or the familiar—the objects, materials, and visual information we come across in our daily lives—is as significant to me as the canon, no matter how inclusive you make it.

**Liz Miller:** You have a background in fibers and teach fibers at the university level. In your own work, you utilize traditional techniques as well as much more experimental approaches. How do fibers, textiles, and related processes figure into your practice?

**Surabhi Ghosh:** Another huge question! I’ll start by referring back to your first question: pattern and repetition are an intrinsic part of textiles, part of every single step of the creation of cloth, from spinning to plying to warping to weaving. My specialty in fibers is printed textiles, which has a heavy emphasis on patterning. I make choices about which processes to use for a project depending on my subject matter and my conceptual goals. My largest installation piece so far, titled *A hair’s breadth, the unfurled sea*, was made using traditional processes in non-traditional ways. For example, the blue “hair” section is actually unwoven sections of warp yarns—the woven section is hidden on top of the beam. It had to be partially woven to hold the hundreds of strands of



Surabhi Ghosh, *A hair’s breadth, the unfurled sea*, cotton cloth, tencel yarn, textile ink, thread, 4 ft (w) x 88.5 ft (l), Wing Luke Museum, Seattle, WA, 2016. Photo: Surabhi Ghosh



yarn together in an orderly manner, as well as to have a solid portion I could mount onto the beam. We tested many different ideas in the studio, and hand-weaving on a floor loom was the simplest way to get what I needed for the piece.

My parents were immigrants to the US. I have a large extended family around the world, and I was brought up as part of various South Asian communities. My parents were proud of their roots, and they really missed their homes and families in India. My family wanted me to learn about “our culture” and taught me about art, music, dance, and literature. I always tell people how “general knowledge” of textiles is much more extensive in India than in North America. Growing up, I loved to watch my mom putting on a sari for a dinner party; I loved watching the 6 meters of fabric start as a pile on the ground and end up neatly pleated and tucked around her body. As she dressed, she’d tell me all about the sari—this is a cotton-silk blend, it was made in this specific small town in Gujarat, the pattern is woven on the border but printed on this other part, the motif is from a peacock feather or maybe a mango, they call it a paisley over here but [that’s not an Indian word](#), this was a gift from your aunt at so-and-so’s wedding, it was a very nice gift, it probably cost 500 rupees, which is less than 10 dollars over here, and so on. So, while she was getting dressed, my mom taught me about material, technique, pattern and motif, geography, colonial history, family, and economics! And it was all embedded in one piece of cloth. This is the field of Fibers, and my approach to teaching Fibers and making art.

Going to art school was productively problematic for me—confirming that much of what I valued was not considered “real art,” while also learning that artists have been challenging that taxonomy all along. I had some great professors, some great friends, and, also, the fibers department.

Fibers is a place to challenge everything, including art. In a university context, it’s a place for critical analysis of material, culture, history, global economics, colonialism, and normative identities. In the North American context, where we are still bogged down by old-fashioned notions of gendered labor, fibers is connected to “women’s work”—what this means today, at least for me, is that contemporary fibers provides a highly productive and supportive space for intersectional feminist critique in a studio arts context.



Surabhi Ghosh, *A hair's breadth, the unfurled sea*, cotton cloth, tencel yarn, textile ink, thread, 4 ft (w) x 88.5 ft (l), Wing Luke Museum, Seattle, WA, 2016. Photo: Surabhi Ghosh





Above and below: Surabhi Ghosh, *A hair's breadth, the unfurled sea*, cotton cloth, tencel yarn, textile ink, thread, 4 ft (w) x 88.5 ft (l), Wing Luke Museum, Seattle, WA, 2016. Photo: Surabhi Ghosh





Another reason I use textiles is that cloth is unruly; it fights against our attempts to control it. Cloth behaves however it will; it collaborates with gravity (it sags, droops, and drapes), with air (it waves, flutters, and inflates), with light (it filters or blocks), with liquids (it absorbs and then dries again). Those of us trained to make and manipulate textiles spend a lot of time trying to control the materials and processes, because the techniques are intended to make functional objects. But what the art context enables us to do is to stop and ask “Why”—that is, why control it? What does the material/process potentially do and say, and how can I collaborate with that in order to speculate on new possible meanings?



Surabhi Ghosh, *Squaring circles*, upholstery vinyl, pins, 14 ft x14 ft, 2017 (version 2).  
Photo: Guy L'Heureux

**Liz Miller:** Describe a pivotal experience in your life/career and how it impacted your work.

**Surabhi Ghosh:** I find that every big change in my life—moving, a new job, etc.—has an immediate impact on my work. But my most recent move has been the most transformative for sure. After grad school, I lived and worked in Chicago for about seven years, then Eugene, Oregon, for three years. I moved from Oregon to Montreal in 2014. Everything changed! For the second time in just a few years, I said goodbye to a close-knit group of artists and friends and started over from scratch. I didn't know anyone in Montreal, the immigration process was very challenging, and I definitely didn't know French. It was destabilizing but also invigorating.

I am an immigrant now. Even being the child of two immigrants, I had no idea how difficult it really is. I have a newfound and profound respect for anyone, including my parents, who leaves their home for the protection or opportunity it could provide their families. I did this for an awesome new job, was helped by my employer, and live an hour's drive away from my home country. I did this in part for "a new experience," and it turns out it's pretty hard. Meanwhile, every day I read news reports about what's happening at both borders of the US. I've been examining my own privileged position in the world, finally addressing for myself what it meant to grow up as a brown woman in the US, and I've been rethinking how my art practice fits into things. This has led to a huge shift in my work—I'm talking and writing openly about identity as part of my work for the first time, and I'm feeling extremely unsure about it. But I think it's time to consider how I might make more meaningful contributions if I'm more honest with myself and with others. This has meant confronting some traumatic experiences for the first time, and acknowledging that psychological self-preservation is a valid reason, but it's not a good excuse anymore.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Draupadi draped*, upholstery vinyl, 13.5 ft x 10 ft x 8 ft, 2017. Photos: Guy L'Heureux



Surabhi Ghosh, *Draupadi draped*, upholstery vinyl, 13.5 ft x 10 ft x 8 ft, 2017. Photos: Guy L'Heureux



Liz Miller: What are you working on now, and where can we see your work in the future?

**Surabhi Ghosh:** I am working on a new body of work that builds on a 2017 piece called *Garlanding & Guise*, made for the [SPACE Gallery](#) window last summer. This work comes out of investigating the invention of nationalist ideologies, how those shifting narratives are transmitted to people over time and space, and how those narratives reinforce oppressive roles for women. I'm responding to the rise of nationalism and the rhetoric of "populism" in the US and in India, the two countries of my "origin" (of course this a highly alarming global trend, and Canada is not exempt by any means).



Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise*, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, 159 in x 109 in x 40 in, 2017.  
Photo: SPACE Gallery



I'm working with the form of the "garland" as a particularly loaded ritual object and symbol of devotion in religious contexts (like a Hindu wedding ceremony) as well as being wielded as part of political spectacles in the current political context in India, now controlled by a far-right Hindu nationalist party (Modi's BJP). I'm linking garlands, jewelry, and armor in their functions as symbolic, decorative, and protective objects—but they also function as guises, ruses, objects that trick us into becoming devotees, objects that hide ugly truths and present fictitious outward-facing narratives to observers.



Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise*, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, 159 in x 109 in x 40 in, 2017.  
Photo: SPACE Gallery



Surabhi Ghosh, *Garlanding & Guise*, upholstery vinyl, screws, ink, 159 in x 109 in x 40 in, 2017.  
Photo: SPACE Gallery

I'm presenting a paper titled "Carrying Cloth: Materials, Migration and Mediated Identity" at the [Textile Society of America symposium](#) in Vancouver in September 2018. My next research trip will take me to Trinidad and Tobago in December, where I hope to learn more about the South Asian diaspora in the Caribbean. I'll be showing my new work in a two-person show (titled *Margins, Material, and Metaphor*) with the amazing artist [Olivia Valentine](#) at [Heaven Gallery](#) in Chicago in March–April 2019. I'm also working towards a publication project, and I will continue collaborating with artist and colleague [Sarah Nance](#) on our ongoing series of sand drawings.





Above and below: Surabhi Ghosh and Sarah Nance, *15:1 (circle packing)*, black sand, 12 ft x 12 ft, 2017.





**Liz Miller:** I know that artists are only supposed to make art and do artsy things, but I'm always curious about artists' interests outside of art. What are you doing when you're not in the studio?

**Surabhi Ghosh:** I am in the studio as much as possible! But I'm also a teacher, and I've been running the Fibres & Material Practices program at [Concordia](#) for three years, so a big chunk of my time is spent on that, which is a real pleasure and an honor, even if I wish I had more studio time during the school year. But right now it's summer, and I'm in the studio every day!

Outside of art and work, I spend as much time as possible with my amazing partner Rob. This summer, we wander around Montreal, cook and consume delicious food and drink, watch films, listen to music, read . . . we also collaborate on publication projects and are just starting to work on a new book. We spend a ridiculous amount of time doting on our kitty Rafi. My mom lives in California and my sister lives in Switzerland, so I spend time keeping in touch with them, and we are always planning our next get-together. I also spend time talking about how I should do more exercise.

Surabhi Ghosh is an artist and educator based in Montreal, Quebec. Her current work investigates the transmission of culture to diasporic people, specifically South Asian immigrants and their descendants in North America. She uses textiles, patterns, and site-responsive installations to materialize contradictory narratives which begin and end in her own experiences. Recently, her work has been exhibited at the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle, FOFA Gallery in Montreal, SPACE Gallery in Portland, ME, Duke Hall Gallery in Harrisonburg, VA, and Ditch Projects in Springfield, OR. Ghosh received her MFA in Fiber from Cranbrook Academy of Art and her BFA in Fabric Design from the University of Georgia. She is currently Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of Fibres & Material Practices at Concordia University.

[surabhighosh.com](http://surabhighosh.com)

June 29, 2018



Surabhi Ghosh Exhibition | *The weight of our myths*

<https://youtu.be/onYGcTiiYCI?si=bE6ySe2C8xrLboPU>