

People

Valuations: Curator Anjali Nanda Diamond Puts Stock in Relationships, Niche Zines, and Her Signature Elsa Peretti Cuffs

We asked the executive director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation about the things she values most—in art and in life.

Katie White, April 13, 2023



Photo: George Bolster. Courtesy of Anjali Nanda Diamond.

So much of the art world orbits around questions of value, not only in term of appraisals and price tags, but also: What is worthy of your time in These Times, as well as your energy, your attention, and yes, your hard-earned cash?

What is the math that you do to determine something's meaning and worth? What moves you? What enriches your life? In this new series, we're asking individuals from the art world and beyond about the valuations that they make at a personal level.

New York City-based curator Anjuli Nanda Diamond knows how to mix purpose with pleasure—even when, as with the past months, her calendar has been a whirlwind.

Diamond is the executive director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation (SDRF), located in Manhattan's Flatiron district, a mission-driven organization which supports civic change through arts programming. She was appointed to the position last year after nearly a decade as a curator with the foundation.



Diamond sitting beside Bang Geul Han's monumental *Warp and Weft #05* (2022). Photo: George Bolster. Courtesy of Anjuli Nanda Diamond.

Diamond, who can typically be found at her office, sipping a Diet Coke and donning her signature Elsa Peretti Bone cuffs, is a font of new ideas, and she spends her days ceaselessly trying to bring these visions to life. Right now, The 8th Floor, the foundation's gallery, is presenting "Land of Tenderness," a solo exhibition of works by Korean-born multimedia artist Bang Geul Han—co-curated by Diamond. Last year, she launched SDRF's first ever curatorial open call, a success which resulted in "EI Corazón Aúlla (Heart Howls): Latin American Feminist Performance in Revolt," an exhibition that brought together a powerful group of contemporary Latinx artists. (This year's open-call winner, Caitlin Chaisson, was just announced last week). Last year also saw the publication of *An Incomplete Archive of Activist Art*, a two-volume publication Diamond co-edited, which is filled with essays, poems, and newly commissioned artwork examining SDRF's art and social justice initiatives. This spring, meanwhile, she is working to organize "Sight/Geist," three nights of film and video art screenings focused on pressing cultural questions at the foundation.

In her coveted free time, Diamond is just as passionate, and she can be found thrifting at Housing Works, supporting NYC meal-delivery charity God's Love We Deliver, and enjoying the sights and sounds of the city with her husband, son Ravi, and beloved dog Luna. Recently we chatted with Diamond about what she values in art and life—and why.



View of Lower Manhattan at the corner of Beaver Street and William Street taken during walking tour, March 2023. Courtesy of Anjuli Nanda Diamond.

What is the last thing that you splurged on?

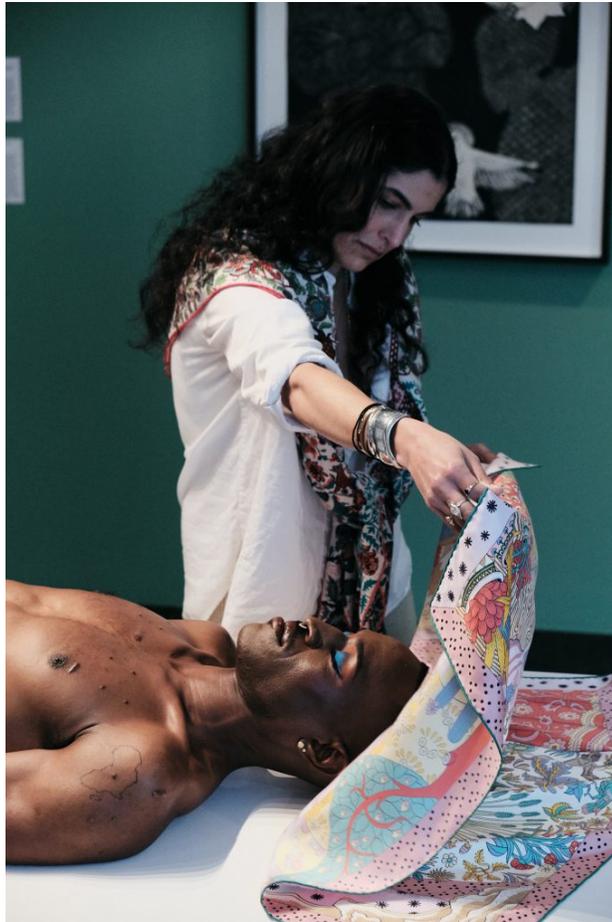
My husband is notoriously difficult to shop for, so recently, I got him tickets for a private historic walking tour of the Financial District, Lower Manhattan and the Seaport. It was led by Keith Taillon, a historian who specializes in the many centuries of development in this city. I began following his Instagram [@keithyorkcity](#) during the pandemic, and have long admired it. Having never taken a walking tour like that previously, particularly in New York—it was amazing for me to see the city through a new lens, and explore its discrete layers of cultural and political history.

What is something that you're saving up for?

I have always wanted to go to Japan, I feel that is something worth saving for. It would be fascinating to see Tokyo and Kyoto, to see some artists' studios, and perhaps visit Hokkaido and Osaka.

What would you buy if you found \$100?

The first thing I would do is go to my local newsstand and buy a Diet Coke. With the remaining \$97.50, I would go to Printed Matter and stock up on as many zines and art books as possible. I love to collect books, and have found some incredible publications there. One of my all-time favorites is by Chris Nosenzo on the “Klein-Fünke Comparison,” which brings together Tobias Fünke’s obsession with The Blue Man Group, and artist Yves Klein’s International Klein Blue. It brilliantly conflates marks left by Tobias around the Bluth Model Home in the series *Arrested Development* with Klein’s “Anthropometry” paintings.



Carlos Martiel, *Alter ego*, June 18, 2022, at The 8th Floor. Photo: Phillip Andrew Iglesias. Courtesy of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation.

What makes you feel like a million bucks?

That rare occasion when, on the day before an opening, whereby miraculous occurrence, everything has come together with time to spare.

What do you think is your greatest asset?

My sense of self, knowing when to compromise, and knowing where to draw the line.

What do you most value in a work of art?

All of my favorites are those I return to again and again, to experience something new. Although it is outside of my curatorial life, I always make plans to see Titian's Assunta whenever I am in Venice.

Who is an emerging artist worthy of everyone's attention?

The three that spring to mind without hesitation are Carlos Martiel, Christopher Udemzue, and Bang Geul Han. Each of them employs a compelling viewpoint with which to understand and contemplate the world we inhabit. Additionally, they are all wonderful to collaborate with.

Who is an overlooked artist who hasn't yet gotten their due?

There needs to be a substantial rewriting of art history to factor in the many artists who have been marginalized or overlooked by the Western art canon. The list is far too large to fit in this article. Recently, I was introduced to the work of such an artist—Winfred Rembert, a 20th-century African American artist. His solo show blew me away, partly because of his incredible life story, and also because of his highly unusual process of making paintings. How many artists win a Pulitzer in addition to their art practice?

What, in your estimation, is the most overrated thing in the art world?

As a beer drinker, I find it exceptionally punishing when there is only wine provided at openings.

What is your most treasured possession?

My Bone cuffs by Elsa Peretti are my protective talismans, they make me feel like Wonder Woman, and I wear them on each wrist in the way she did.

What's been your best investment?

A few years back I found an incredible full-length cashmere overcoat at Housing Works in Chelsea, for \$75 with the tags still on it. Still in perfect condition! On a more serious note, in this business, the best investment you can make is maintaining positive relationships with people.



Luna and Ravi. Courtesy of Anjali Nanda Diamond.

What is something small that means the world to you?

In terms of size, my son and dog are of a similar scale, and I am smitten with both.

What's not worth the hype?

“Under 30” lists.

What do you believe is a worthy cause?

Organizations that have the power to transform this city for the better are close to my heart. There are many admirable ones. Two favorites are Recess, which has a criminal justice court-diversion program for teenagers, and God's Love We Deliver, who for over 30 years have taken care of those too sick to shop and cook for themselves. Both do incredible work in New York City.

What do you aspire to?

To quote Tracy Jordan: “Live every week like it's Shark Week.”