



The ***GILDED ONES***

THE RACONTEUR

SHRUTI GANGULY

FILMMAKER. STORYTELLER. ACTIVIST. WORLD TRAVELER.

From her chic, eclectic and delightfully cluttered apartment deep in the heart of New York City's Chinatown, Shruti seems to run the world. Her world, that is. One in which she plans, envisions and creates a multitude of projects that have her criss-crossing the globe, often at a moment's notice. From working with Keanu Reeves — to directing and producing projects that have premiered at the Sundance, Venice, Berlin and Telluride film festivals — to being selected to participate in the 4th annual Through Her Lens: Tribeca Chanel Women's Filmmaker Program, Shruti is living a life that is bursting at the seams with passion, curiosity and creativity. Shruti took an afternoon to share with us what it's like to be a female indie filmmaker, a fiercely opinionated activist for women's issues, and a true style maven in her own right. Please meet Shruti!



TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?

Home Base. I am from India originally; however, I grew up in Muscat, Oman. I returned to India during my teenage years for boarding school and then headed off to Illinois for college. After graduation, I moved to New York City, where I've lived for the past 14 years. My boyfriend lives in Oslo, so these days, I divide my time between New York and Norway.

School Daze. I went to college at Northwestern University from which I graduated with degrees in economics and fine art. Thereafter, I became the first graduate from New York University's dual MFA/MBA program at Tisch and Stern. Hey – it's good to preserve all of your career options!

The J.O.B. I am a filmmaker. A storyteller. And a business woman.

The first thing I do every morning is . . . I spend the first five minutes after waking up going through all that I have planned for the day and preparing myself for everything on my agenda. Then I jump out of bed, make coffee, switch on the news and hop into the shower. I usually have a breakfast meeting every day at around 8:00 am. Knowing that I have to make that early morning meeting kickstarts me into action!

The people closest to me would tell you that I am: Curious. Extremely loyal. Deeply passionate about my work and all of its possibilities. Not likely to pass up a glass of good wine.

THREE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE?

Smart. Arty. Sporty.







STYLE ICONS — WHOSE STYLE DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY?

Katherine Hepburn and Maharani Gayatri Devi. Why? Because they made dressing up seem so easy and effortless.

WHAT ARE YOUR GO-TO WARDROBE PIECES?

My black ruffled Sachin & Babi skirt, a shirt by Dharma G (a Milan-based designer), white Adidas sneakers and accessories designed by my best friend, Riddhika Jesrani.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR PERSONAL STYLE HAVE YOU ABANDONED OVER THE YEARS?

My head was caught up in headbands between 2006 and 2009. I've since escaped that trend.





WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE FILMS?

My all-time favorite films are definitely old-school: Dr. Strangelove by Stanley Kubrick (1964) , 8 1/2 by Federico Fellini (1963) and Pather Panchali by Satyajit Ray (1955). But I also love more contemporary movies like Clueless by Amy Heckerling and Amelie by Jeunet. Each of these movies made me look at the world differently. They opened my eyes to an alternative set of rules, unique humor and sublime clothing and style.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE FILMS?

I love the unconventional design philosophy of [Paola Navone](#). She is at once an architect, a product designer, an interior designer and a teacher. I enjoy the work of people like Paola who challenge norms and seek to explore multiple interests and passions without feeling compelled to follow a defined path.

I am a huge fan of clothing designer, [Tsumori Chisato](#). Her pieces are wild, colorful and intoxicating.

I am currently wildly obsessed with the NPR podcast ,“[How I Built This](#)”. You have to check it out. The host, Guy Raz, delves into how various well known companies came into existence. As a young entrepreneur in the process of building a production company, these stories are exciting and inspiring. Listening to these podcasts reminds me that even the biggest companies started with just an idea and a creator.

Did I mention that I cannot walk away from a piece of [brown goat's milk cheese from Norway](#)? It's incredible. I recommend that you find some. I am also digging [organic orange wines](#) right now.

When I need to work off the effects of wine and cheese, I head to [The Class by Taryn Toomey](#). My friend, [CJ](#), teaches a class there and nothing makes me sweat and tone up more!



YOU HAVE FOLLOWED AN UNUSUAL CAREER PATH – FROM STUDYING ECONOMICS TO MAKING FILMS. TELL US MORE.

As I mentioned earlier, I studied economics and fine art at Northwestern University. I was set on becoming an investment banker after graduation. I even interned in the investment and retail banking divisions at the National Bank of Oman. All of that changed during my sophomore year when my cousin, Puja, passed away suddenly. Losing Puja made me confront and accept just how precious every moment of life really is. I knew I needed to be brave enough to do what I really wanted to do – not what I thought I should do. Gradually, my internships changed. I tried consulting, advertising and journalism. And then it happened – “it” being the moment I understood what I was meant to do. I found myself in a class called “Women in Indian Cinema”, which resonated with me deeply. This class taught me about the power of film to transform minds. I realized that I had something to say and that film was the best medium for me to express myself. I have never looked back.



YOU FOUNDED THE PRODUCTION COMPANY, HONTO 88. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES IN RUNNING A CREATIVE BUSINESS?

Starting [honto88](#) has to be one of the most exciting and terrifying things I've ever done. We create visual media that we believe will have a positive impact on, or even change, the world. [honto88](#) has been in existence for one year now – and I am so happy that I took the risk – but I must tell you, this company did not come into being without some real challenges. Prior to starting [honto88](#), I left another production company that I co-founded. Before I could focus on new endeavors, I had to take some time to reflect on what I really wanted to create and champion. Then I had to find new partners. Moreover, I had to learn to rebuild my ability to trust – to trust my partners, the creative process and myself. This meant learning how to be kind to myself and to be patient with, and enjoy, the process. One of the hallmarks of many creative businesses – especially in the beginning as you try to find your footing – is that work and payment cycles are constantly in flux. I am happy to say that we are finally in a position to focus on the projects that are meaningful to us.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PRIORITIES OF HONTO 88?

We make brave TV, film, video and virtual reality experiences that make one stop, think and look again. I am not interested in making the same type of work over and over or following a formula because it is easy and profitable. I am compelled to create experiences that are memorable and daring. [honto88](#) focuses on producing content based on global ideas. We love stories centered around strong, well-developed female characters. And we seek out thoughtful and kind creative partners with whom to do business.



YOU ARE A CHAMPION OF ISSUES THAT MATTER TO WOMEN. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE DOING IN THAT SPACE?

I am on the board of an organization called [Commit2Change](#), which focuses on educating orphan girls in India. I've seen firsthand how our programs have transformed the lives of thousands of dynamic young women who will become a vital part of the future of India.

I am also a co-founder of the [Resistance Revival Chorus](#) — a group of women who sings songs of protest — reminding us that the expression of joy is often an act of resistance. I became involved in the creation of the Chorus after talking with friends who were behind the Women's March in 2016. Over the course of a year, we turned our words into a beautiful reality. The Resistance Revival Chorus is filled with some of the most inspiring women I have ever known. The Chorus has performed all over the country, including Carnegie Hall, the Grammys and Lincoln Center. It's been an incredible journey.

A few weeks ago, I learned that I was chosen to participate in the 4th annual [Tribeca Chanel Women's Filmmaker Program](#). The program nurtures the artistic voices of up-and-coming U.S. based female writers and directors by providing funding, project support and mentorship. Our mentors and advisors include Courtney Cox, Lena Dunham, Kathryn Bigelow and Ellen Chenoweth! I am so thrilled to have been chosen to participate in this program!

I am a big believer in mentoring. I've had (and still have) some incredible mentors. As a result, I feel that I must give back in kind. So, at [honto88](#), we seek out, hire and develop female filmmakers who we believe will become the next generation of artists having something to say.





WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

I want to buy a house in Oman. My parents left Oman for India last year. Their return to Dehli caused me to reflect on the notion of "home" and belonging to a place. Oman is special to me – so much so that I want to be able to return over and over again.

I want to go to Japan with my boyfriend. I've been to Japan a few times. It is one of my favorite places in the world, so I want us to experience it together.

YOU HAVE LIVED IN INDIA, OMAN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND YOU TRAVEL FREQUENTLY TO NORWAY. WHERE TO NEXT?

Earlier this year, I went to Argentina and Sri Lanka in connection with a couple of film projects. I would love to visit both places again – but for a much longer period of time! And then, of course, there's Japan.



WHERE WOULD YOU TELL OUT-OFTOWNERS TO GO IN ORDER TO GET YOUR NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCE?

I live in Chinatown, which is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood. My recommendations? [The Golden Unicorn](#) for a weekend brunch (it gets quite crowded so it pays to head there on the earlier side of brunch-time). Then take a walk to the Dumbo neighborhood of Brooklyn via the Manhattan Bridge. The view of Manhattan from [Dumbo House](#) is stunning! But before you cross the Manhattan Bridge, grab some delicious fruit from the market right under the bridge to munch on along the way!





WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT GOLD?

I hail from India where we grow up wearing and cherishing high karat (22k and 24k) gold. Gold is a huge part of our culture and heritage. Gold pieces are passed down from generation to generation. I treasure the pieces that I have inherited from my mother and both of my grandmothers.

WHAT AUVERE PIECES CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT?

All of it! I LOVE EVERYTHING!! Seriously. I am used to seeing traditionally crafted gold jewelry so it is really wonderful to see modern and architectural design applied to gold. As far as the rings go, I am quite partial to the [Callen Rings](#), the [Slash Rings](#), the [Vortex Ring](#) and my absolute favorite — the new [Spike Ring](#) (apparently, I am the first to wear it!). [The Flex Earring](#) is simultaneously rigorous in design and whimsical in feel. And for timeless luxe, I absolutely fell for the [Cage Convertible Rope Necklace](#).



PARTING WORDS?

We don't always appreciate how short and precious our time on earth really is. Let's celebrate our lives by approaching each day with a sense of wonder, curiosity and bravery!



SHRUTI IS WEARING:

Look 1:

Multicolored print dress: From a street vendor in Fort Greene, Brooklyn; Sneakers: AGL; Jewelry: Auvere (Callen Ring Polished; Xanthe Ring Polished; Slash Ring; Torsion Earrings; Cage Convertible Rope Necklace; Double Moon Ear Cuff Satin)

Look 2:

Yellow dress: Vintage; Shoes: United Nude; Jewelry: Auvere (Valo-L Necklace; Golden Globes Necklace; Hug Me Huggie Earrings Satin; Double Moon Ear Cuff Satin; Golden Apex Ring Satin; Slash Ring Satin; Double Barrel Ring Satin; Triple Barrel Ring Satin)

Look 3:

Tuxedo shirt: Vintage; Black Ruffled Skirt: Sachin & Babi; Vest: Sachin & Babi; Shoes: Repetto; Jewelry: Auvere (Double Moon Ear Cuff Satin; Double Moon Ear Cuff Polished; Flex Earrings; Cage Stud Earring Satin; Slash Ring Polished; Vortex Ring Polished)

Look 4:

Blue tunic: Payal Khandwala; Pajama Jacket: Lisa Von Tang; Jeans: Vintage from a Bazaar in India; Jewelry: Auvere (Dagger Cuff; Double Stick Cuff; Triple Cage Necklace; Capture Ear Cuff Polished; Double Moon Ear Cuff Satin; Double Moon Ear Cuff Polished; Cage Stud Earring Polished; Winged Earring; Vortex Ring Polished; Callen Rings Polished; Xanthe Ring Polished; Slash Ring Polished)

Look 5:

Orange Print Dress: Tailor-made in India from Shruti's Mother's Sari; Shoes: Adidas sneakers; Jewelry: Auvere (Callista Cuff; Spike Rings Satin; Arthropod Earring Satin; Double Moon Ear Cuff Satin)