

DOCUMENTARY FILM SOCIETY SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART

Each of us has a story.

Nestled deep inside of us... waiting to be told.

A story that can be glimpsed, not only through the eyes but the mind and the body. Heard, in hushed whispers and at other moments, a deafening volume. Felt, through the light touch of a hand as it brushes the surface of cloth. Inhaled, through the wafting fragrance of flowers and the salty ocean breeze. And tasted, across a whole spectrum of flavours infused in a family recipe passed down generations.

Transcending language, culture and time, storytelling is intrinsic to our understanding of human experience and for communicating the complexity of our existence. In shaping our identities, beliefs and behaviours, the profound impact of stories on our lives may be seen through the intimate bonds we establish with the objects and spaces we make and create around us.

Describing the act of writing and telling stories as a form of craft, Walter Benjamin notes how the 'traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprint of the potter clings to the vessel'. Taking up a myriad of forms, shapes and colours, a story can unfold with each word scribbled across the pages of a diary seeking to be understood as an expression of faith, devotion and surrender, when witnessed through the lens of Jude Chehab in *Q*. Or it can speak to us from the image of a faded childhood photograph that prompts a questioning of the entangled narratives of family relationships in a desperate effort to break the silence, as captured poignantly by Asmae El Moudir in *The Mother of All Lies*.

The spaces we inhabit also reveal the many tales of

the collective in bringing together the past, present and the future. Echoing through the majestic mountains and the rainforests, reverberating within the rising arches and barren concrete walls and pulsating through the city streets, it is through their stories that we come to understand our shared worlds. The mesmerizing patterns underneath our feet may speak of a rich cultural history as Dana Awartani's video and installation *I Went Away and Forgot You...* poetically suggest, but if we listen closely they beckon us to look beyond the visible.

In acting as representations of both the individual and the social, stories draw us deep down into the vortex of our imagination as we make sense of the world. They not only capture a unique moment in time, place and memory but connect us to each other in an intricate web of relations. From this perspective, we may begin to see storytelling as a way of understanding and knowing ourselves and our vast universe.

As our worlds shift and collide with the impacts of war, disease and climate change, the narratives we

weave into the tapestry of our lives will remind us, and be remembered by those after us, of the fragility of our existence and of this earthly home that we share with others. It is the hum of these voices that gently but surely urge us to pause and listen.

Listen to the stories within and around us, the ones already told, and those patiently awaiting their turn.

SAHR BASHIR

This essay has been commissioned for
the Parnati Season / Dana Awartani



MERCURY CINEMA, ADELAIDE

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY

THE MOTHER OF ALL LIES

ASMAE EL MOUDIR

THURSDAY 2 MAY



JUDE CHEHAB