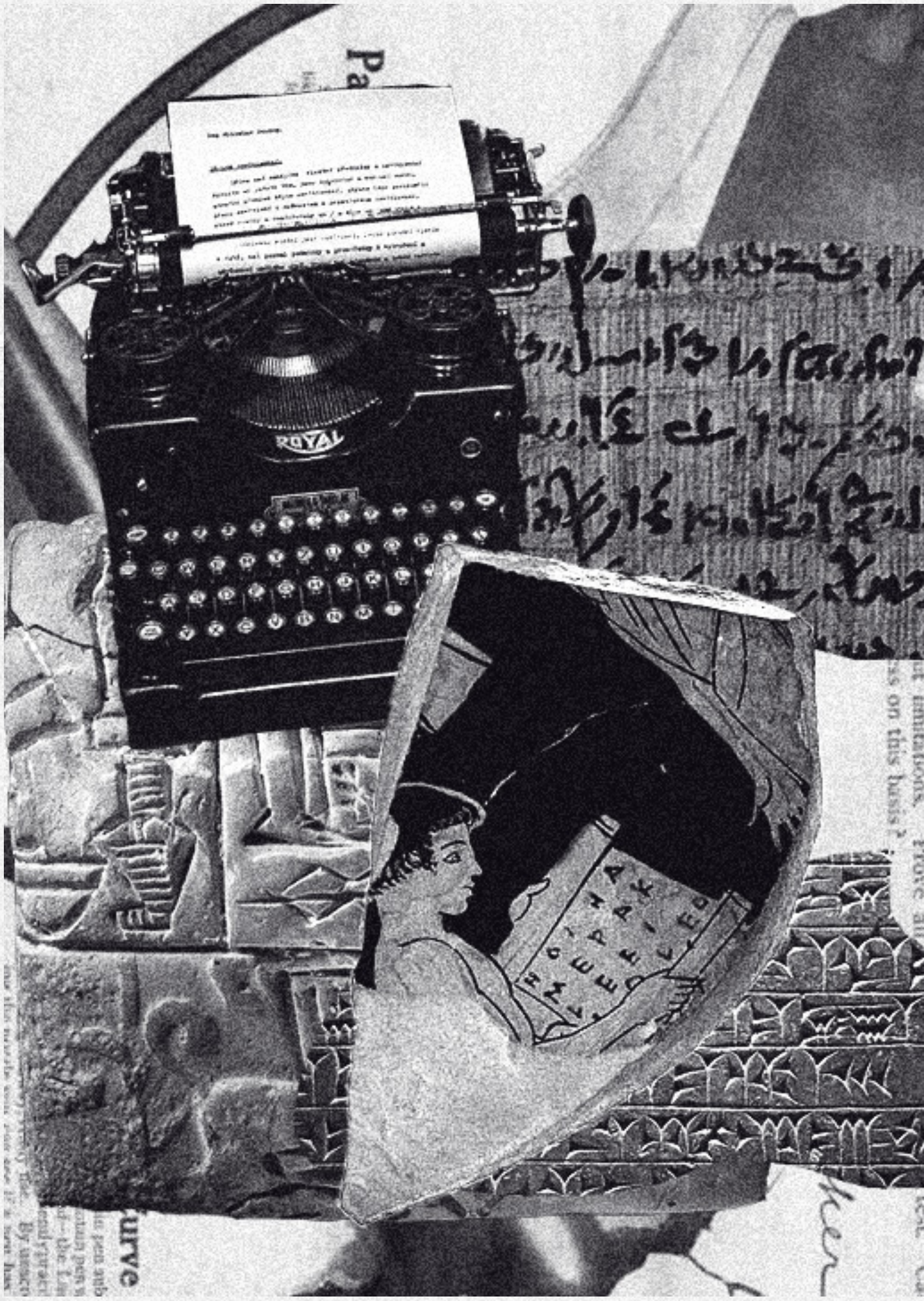


Once Upon a Tomorrow

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THURSDAY



Collage by Sijya Gupta

In the beginning was the word

And soon after, there came many words and many different stories. For as long as human beings have walked the earth, they have sought to chronicle their lives in ways that transcend time, space, and even language. They became the stories they told, and those tales charted a roadmap to understanding who they and their descendants were as a people. Stories became the most powerful way to immortalise life: if it happened, it was history and would be written; if it didn't, it would be imagined and be told.

Storytelling is one of the most powerful devices we have because stories build worlds — worlds we have, worlds we want, and worlds worth fighting for. But what happens when stories are weaponised by those seeking to destroy those very worlds? Stories can also betray and amplify the structures of power and blindspots in our everyday life, which perpetuate the status quo.

In an attempt to combat those structures, we have arrived at Narrative Change, a collective practice that aims to explore some of the most critical questions around stories and storytelling:

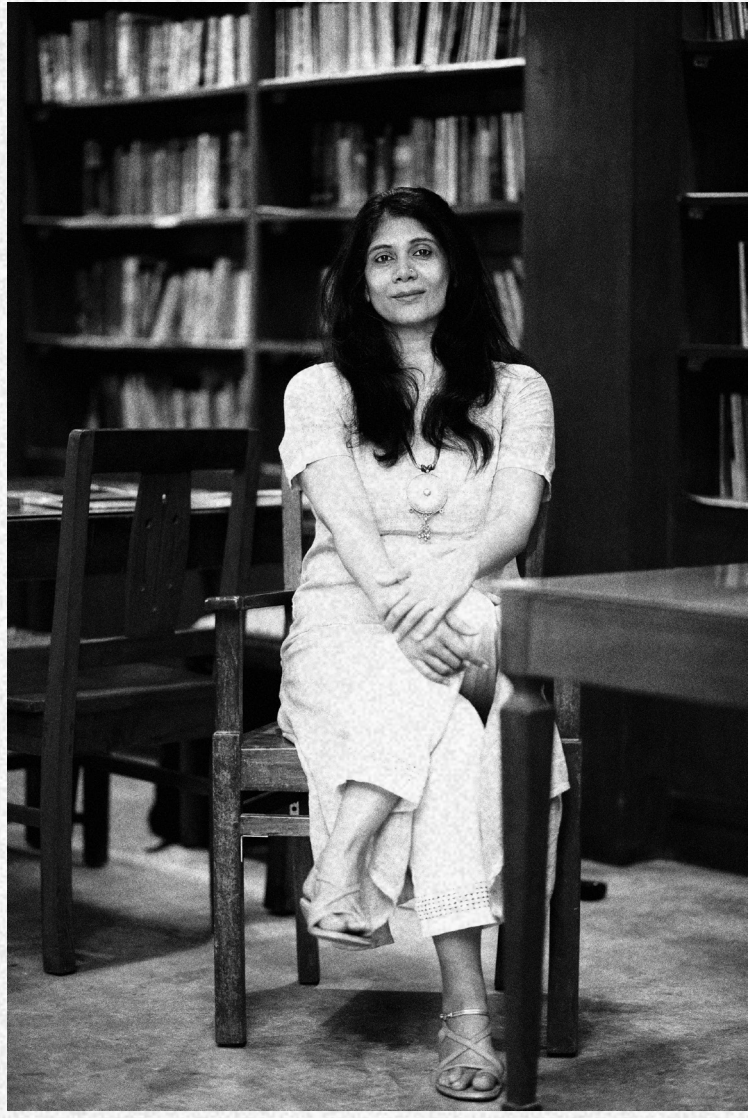
- Is it enough to think of what stories we tell?*
- What happens once a story is told?*
- How do stories spread?*
- How do stories not just reflect the world but change it?*
- How do stories orient us towards hope?*
- Can stories lead to collective action?*

Welcome to *Once Upon a Tomorrow*: a project that has emerged from some difficult observations about the challenges of diversity, inclusion, equality, engagement, and belonging in the complex and contested worlds we live in. *Once Upon a Tomorrow* (OUaT) is a co-created, critical, collaborative, and distributed deep-dive that brings together narrative experts to think, explore, prototype — and imagine new modes of narrative change that lead to collective action of hope. Over the course of the next three months, we will come together through Action Labs, Knowledge Studios, and Narration Hubs, to create a resource set that shows the possibilities and hope of how narrative change can be generated through collective action for hopeful futures.

Over this period, we will work distributed but together, remotely but intensely, in synchronous and asynchronous sessions that are co-created with this group of narrative experts. We will draw upon our individual expertise and collective experiences to create baselines, curate galleries, and produce toolkits that help understand and show how narrative change practice can be implemented.

And so we asked our narrative experts our first question: "Through your presence in this world, what do you hope for?"

Narrative Change: Residents



Shinnie Antony

Antony has written short-story collections — *Barefoot and Pregnant*, *The Orphanage For Words* — and novels, *The Girl Who Couldn't Love* and *When Mira Went Forth and Multiplied*. She has compiled the anthologies *Why We Don't Talk*, *An Unsuitable Woman*, and *Boo*. Co-founder of the Bangalore Literature Festival, and director of the Bengaluru Poetry Festival, her story, *A Dog's Death*, won the Commonwealth Short Story Asia prize in 2002. She is a columnist with CNBC, *The New Indian Express* and *The Times of India*. Her next novel, *Can't*, will be out in 2023.

Through my presence in this world... I hope to be a connector of sorts, a team member in the HR department of arts, culture and literature; to be the blank space where reflections meet and create.

Safurat Balogun

Safurat Balogun holds a degree in Social Sciences and Social Policy from University of Siegen, Germany. In an unprecedented career change, she joined Goethe-Institut Nigeria in 2016. She is currently the head of library services at Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi. She is passionate about storytelling and hopes to drive a form of narrative change.

Through my presence in this world... I want to inspire young Black girls to reach higher than ever before, to go places they never thought they'd be able to explore, and to just live life.



Monica Cantieni

Born in 1965 in Switzerland, Cantieni's novel *Grünschnabel* was the finalist for the Swiss Book Awards 2011. The English translation of the same, *The Encyclopaedia of Good Reasons*, published by Seagull Books, Kolkata, was nominated for the First Book Award at the Edinburgh International Book Festival 2015. The novel has been translated into seven languages. She also set up the online culture department of Swiss National Radio and TV and headed it until 2017. After finishing her Master's degree in Digital Management in London (2020) she founded ALPHABET LAB (2021), a service that approaches storytelling in a playful and creative way, crossing artistic practices with digital innovation and transformation processes for cultural and educational institutions. Amongst Cantieni's other published works is *Hieronymus' Kinder*, as well as a large number of short stories in anthologies for which she has received various literary awards and grants. She is currently working on her new novel.

Through my presence in this world... I really hope to connect and create. Connect words to create stories, connect ideas that lead to action, to foster understanding between people.



Kavita Gupta

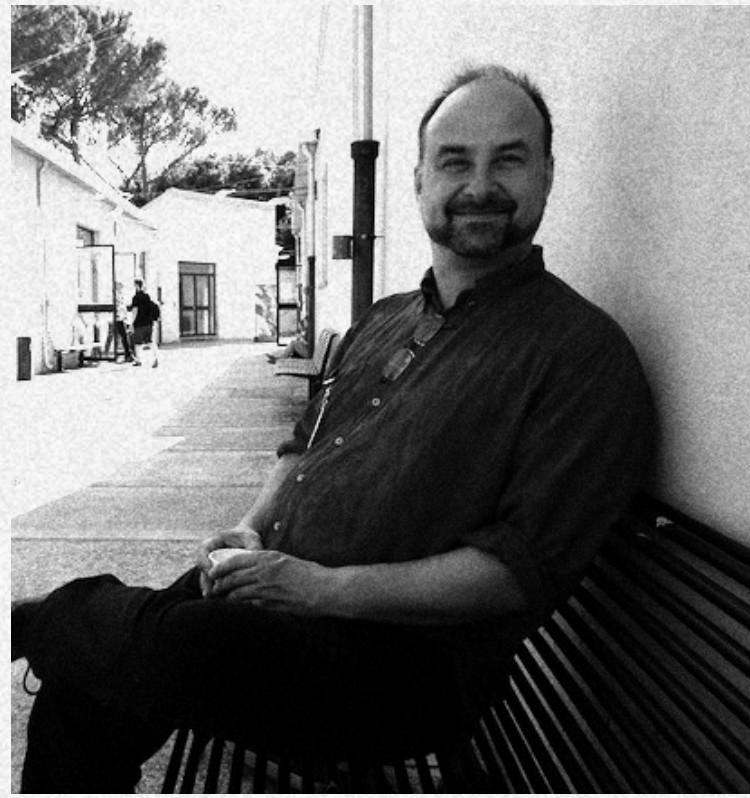
A theatre artist and storyteller, Gupta directs Mirror Workshops for children's theatre. She uses drama lesson plans to help children enhance their self-confidence and develop their personalities. A certified Montessorian, she has trained under many national and international storytellers and theatre practitioners. Some forms of theatre that she dabbles in are Baby theatre, Object theatre, Puppetry and Sensory theatre. Gupta is a member of the Indian Storytelling Network, ASSITEJ India and the Federation of Asian Storytellers.

Through my presence in this world... I hope to bring people together, build the bridges of communication — through not just words but let our bodies speak, our shadows dance, and create a kaleidoscope of stories, which creates empathy for all living beings.

Swati Roy

Roy is a co-founder of Bookaroo, India's first multi-city international children's literature festival. She started her journey into the children's literature world in 2003, by setting up an independent children's bookstore Eureka! Roy works closely with publishers, authors, illustrators and storytellers to spread the joy of reading. While the bookstore enters its 20th year, the festival is into its 14th year.

Through my presence in this world... I hope to spread the joy of reading amongst children. Encourage them to imagine, empower them to question. And to bring creators of books closer to children.



Martin Ellrodt

A performance storyteller and storytelling educator, Ellrodt has been working as a performing artist since 1987; and primarily with narrative since 1996. He has been invited to perform and participate in workshops across four continents and in four languages, in cooperation with Goethe-Institut and other international organisations. His book, *Von der Sprechübung zum freien Erzählen: Freude an der Mündlichkeit im Schulalltag und Unterricht* (From speaking practice to free storytelling: Enjoying orality in everyday school life and lessons) was published in 2006. He is currently the chairman of the Verein für Erzählpädagogik (Association for Storytelling Pedagogy).

Through my presence in this world... I hope to help myself and others around me to be aware of the beauty that is all around us. With my work as a storyteller, I hope to bring a little peace and joy into the hearts of human beings.



Nishant Shah

Dr. Shah is a feminist, humanist, technologist working in digital cultures. He wears many hats as an academic, researcher, educator and annotator. As Chair and Professor of Aesthetics and Cultures of Technologies at ArtEZ University of the Arts, his work is at the intersections of body, identity, digital technologies, artistic practice, and activism. His current interest is in thinking through questions digital narrative practices towards building inclusive, diverse, resilient, and equitable societies.

Through my presence in this world... I hope to practice care as a form of building communities

Art X Company

A strategic consultancy operating at the intersection of arts and access, Art X Company offers consulting, research, curation, audience development, and management services to the cultural sector in India. They conceptualise, curate, and execute interdisciplinary initiatives and research projects across cultural and creative industries in India. Their work includes museum collaborations, multi-genre performances, literature encounters, and studies in the arts sector. Since the pandemic began in 2020, Art X Company has been actively involved in supporting arts organisations and the wider creative sector navigate the way through seismic change, by way of workshops, conversations and panel discussions, and developing critical information resources.

Through my presence in this world... we hope to enhance access to learning and development and professional opportunities, elevate research in the arts, and establish platforms for capacity building and sector development in the Indian and South Asian creative sectors.



The Art X Company represented by (L-R): Rashmi Dhanwani, Dipti Rao, Alekha Ranjitsinh

