



Storm in a Teacup: Portrait of Family, Art and Dementia

by FilmInk Staff

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Filmmaker Nia Pericles turns the camera on her own family for a documentary that will screen as part of Dementia Action Week.

Family holidays were never the same after Nia Pericles was given a video camera by her dad when she turned 12.

Her time as an observational documentary filmmaker had begun.

“As a teenager, I dreamed of working in the media,” Nia says. Fast forward 30 years and she has spent more than two decades working as a producer, director and writer on shows like *Bondi Rescue* and *Getaway*, as well as *The Secret Life of Death* (SBS), *Felicity’s Mental Mission* (ABC) and *Exhumed* (ABC).

But Nia’s family members were her very first subjects, and in the documentary *Storm in a Teacup* – screening on the ABC during Dementia Action Week* – they are her subjects again.

Although Nia has always filmed her mum, her dad and her brother, it’s the first time she’s made something about them for public consumption.

When her father, Perth painter and printmaker Leon Pericles, mounted a 50-year retrospective of his work in 2018, Nia set the cameras rolling. She takes director, writer and narrator credits on the film.

“My aim was to record dad’s retrospective, while simultaneously witnessing the impact of advancing dementia on my mum, Moira,” she says.

Moira started developing memory loss about 10 years ago, when she was only 59. Until 2009, Moira managed the business side of Leon’s work as an artist. She distributed his works to galleries and collectors around the nation, while managing a team of art staff, a framing business and various curatorial roles – as well as being Leon’s creative counsel. Now Leon juggles his role as artist, husband and carer.

“At its heart, *Storm in a Teacup* is an intimate story of a family dealing with big change,” Nia says. “I never wanted to make a film about dementia that was depressing. I wanted it to be playful and funny and a story I hope many people will relate to.”



NIA PERICLES (WRITER/DIRECTOR/NARRATOR) WITH FAMILY FRIEND TIM MINCHIN. PHOTO: PAUL COSTELLO

The documentary tracks Leon and Moira’s daily lives. Nia films family gatherings, the opening of Leon’s retrospective by the Hon Julie Bishop and recollections by family friend, performer Tim Minchin.

The film follows Leon creating an artwork for Moira: his “Etching for Moi” unfolds on screen. “It’s a fitting tribute to mum and a reminder that this film is a love story,” Nia says.

Says Leon of Moira in the film: “She was so fast, so incredibly acute with everything she did. And now all of that is just slowly fluttering away... like leaves on a stream: they just disappear. You know, these little gems, like a beautiful natural coloured leaf that you would pick up and say, ‘Wow isn’t that beautiful’ and it just happens to be going down a river – and that section’s gone.”

“There are so many layers to this film as art, life and love collide,” says executive producer, Celia Tait of Artemis Media. “To step inside Moira’s mind is revelatory and deeply moving and reminds us all what it is to be human. Artemis has a strong focus on social impact films and we are privileged to have joined forces with Nia and the Pericles family.”

As well as being the writer/director/narrator of *Storm in a Teacup*, Nia Pericles is a development executive with Artemis Media.

****Storm in a Teacup* is on the ABC + iview on Tuesday 17 September at 9.30pm**

Storm in a Teacup is an Artemis Media production presented by Screen Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Screenwest and Lotterywest. The producers have worked with the Documentary Australia Foundation, Dementia Australia and the Australian Alzheimers Research Foundation in developing a social impact campaign. ABC Executive Producer: Kalita Corrigan and Sally Chesher. ABC Manager of Arts: Richard Buckham.

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