

Animating Traumatic Memory in Documentary

Symposium: 'Animation Under the Lens: Embracing Diverse Perspectives', AUT 2024

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SAMOUNI ROAD



A Long Night

short animated documentary

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Samouni Road (2018)



- Director: Stefano Savona
- Animation, art director: Simone Massi



Samouni Road
de Stefano Savona

Some conceptual sources

- *Animated Documentary* - animated memories of traumatic events
(Annabelle Honess Roe, 2013)
- *Towards a Materialist Theory of Animated Documentary*
(Anastasiia Gushchina, 2024)
- *Re-animating Space* - 'reverberating space'
(Aylish Wood, 2006)



- For what purpose is animation employed in this documentary?
- What does animation do that the live action alternative could not?
- What is the material affect of this animation method?

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For what purpose is animation employed in this documentary?

- To represent the unrepresentable
- To depict an event in the absence of visual records
- To resolve the absence and fragmentation of memories
- To visualise the recollection of memories by family members
- To materially evoke a semblance of the physiological sensation of living in a war zone.
- To bring the dead to life,
- To connect the past with the present moment.



What does animation do that the live action alternative could not?

- It triggers an imaginative engagement with memory through symbolism and metaphor
- The temporal - spatial motility (and instability) of the animated drawings evokes a sensation of anxiety.
- It heightens the indexicality of both sound and visual imagery, rendering them hyper-real.
- In *Samouna Road* “the [hand-drawn animation] attains the reality that the photographic record cannot (or will not) render” (Juanma Ruiz, 2018).



What is the material affect of this animation method?

“Animation brings back the dead in some ways...to escape reconstitution, necessarily destructive, cartoon opens to fiction”

--- (Director Stephano Savona, quoted in Barlet & Llorca, 2018)

“A desire not to freeze things”

(Barlet and Llorca,2018).



Scratchcard (sgraffito) animation technique



1,200 × 673



“Like a memory, one manages to scratch in the face of denial and forgetfulness, a way to account for the feelings of the characters the director interviewed at length, an outdistanced way to maintain the outline and the words without falling into a speech to retrieve martyrs”

(Barlet & Llorca, 2018)







“Animated documentaries that rely on physical objects or means in their production, in a way, ground their chosen themes in material reality”

(Anastasiia Gushchina, 2023).

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