Unraveling Narratives:
Animated Documentary as Embodied Knowledge

**Summary:**

This presentation explores "UNravel," an interactive installation combining Nepalese textile craft with AR animation to share women weavers' stories of resilience and empowerment. It examines how embodied, sensory, and participatory storytelling can foster new understandings of reality and sustainability.

**Abstract:**

This presentation explores UNravel, a multimedia installation that combines traditional Nepalese textile craft with augmented reality (AR) animation. Created in collaboration with the Women's Skills Development Organization (WSDO), Studio 9 Films, and artist Kim Noce, funded with the support of the British Council International Collaboration Grant.

UNravel highlights the power of storytelling through material and digital interactions. Handmade back-strap woven tapestries serve as AR triggers, revealing personal stories of women weavers, detailing their resilience, cultural heritage, and empowerment.

Building on decolonial research methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), feminist materialism (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010), and performative knowledge (Taylor, 2003), this study examines how materiality and digital storytelling create new ways of understanding reality. The project resists dominant documentary approaches by emphasising embodied, sensory, and participatory knowledge (Minh-ha, 1989). UNravel invites audiences to engage with narratives of gender equity and sustainability through a non-traditional, interactive format.

Inspired by Haraway’s (2016) idea of kinship through storytelling, UNravel moves beyond representation, fostering an immersive and relational experience. The project embraces co-authorship, ethical collaboration, and direct participation. The AR component is an active intervention, reinforcing Taylor’s (2003) argument that knowledge is lived, not just archived. The woven patterns act as memory devices, linking human and non-human interactions and challenging conventional ways of understanding (Barad, 2007).

This presentation will discuss the collaborative creative process behind UNravel, from storytelling methods to AR development and site-responsive animation. It positions the project within an expanded documentary framework, where learning emerges through material, participatory, and sensory experiences. By weaving traditional crafts and digital immersion together, UNravel contributes to discussions on documentary ethics, speculative storytelling, and ecological awareness (Ahmed, 2017; Irani, 2019; Wilson, 2017).

**Links:**

* UnRavel <https://kimnoce.wordpress.com/2023/03/08/unravel/>
* AR <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10239107>
* WSDO [www.wsdonepal.com](https://www.wsdonepal.com)

**Exhibitions**

* 8/3 -10/4/23 Display WSDO – WOW and International Women’s Day, Pokhara Town Hall, Nepal, 17 artworks
* 15/4-22/4/23 Group Exhibition –Beyond Perfection, Kaboom Festival, Utrecht, Netherlands. 1 artwork
* 20/4-20/5/23 Group Exhibition – AWUK Limitless, University of Arts, London, UK. 7 artworks
* 23/5- 30/5/23 Group Exhibition and Conference- Sonic Screen Lab, Online, UK 1 artwork
* 17/6-22/7/23 Group Exhibition – AWUK Limitless, East Gallery Norwich, UK 3 artworks
* 17/1-13/2/25 The Stephen Lawrence Gallery, London, UK, 3 artworks

Trascript

**Slide 0 – Title**

**Slide 1 – Welcome to Unravel**

"Hello everyone. I'm Kim Noce, and today I’d like to take you through Unravel — a participatory, multimedia installation that merges traditional Nepalese weaving with augmented reality, to explore new ways of knowing, new ways of connecting. At its heart, Unravel is a project about small steps and shared acts of storytelling — a collaboration across women in Nepal and the UK, made possible through the support of the British Council International Collaboration Grant."

*"Stories can be powerful forms of resistance and modes of survival." (Smith, 2012, p. 145)*

**Slide 2 – Pokhara Lake**

"Unravel was born almost by accident — during lockdown, when I found myself unexpectedly stranded in Nepal. In Pokhara, amidst uncertainty, I met the Women's Skills Development Organization — WSDO — and our connection was immediate. This project is about what happens when you stop trying to control, and instead allow encounters to shape you. Donna Haraway reminds us that kinship is not about blood ties, but about making-with — making relations. Unravel is precisely that: an entangled kinship between craft, technology, environment, and story."

*"Kin is an assembling sort of enduring fabric, not a genealogical tracing of inheritance but a network of ongoing, interconnected relationships." (Haraway, 2016, p. 103)*

**Slide 3 – Women working at WSDO**

"Our journey started simply: by sharing stories. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, storytelling is a method of resistance and survival — a way to reclaim knowledge outside colonial structures. The women shared accounts of resilience, struggle, hope — not as grand heroic narratives, but through the quiet persistence of daily life. It was important for us that these stories were not just collected — but that they lived, breathed, moved through the project."

*"Storytelling, oral histories, testimonies, and life histories are ways of passing down histories, traditions, knowledge and understanding." (Smith, 2012, p. 146)*

**Slide 4 – Interviews**

"Each voice became a thread woven into the tapestry — both literally and metaphorically. The founder of WSDO, Ramkali Khadka, often spoke of weaving as a way to rebuild broken lives. This resonated with Diana Taylor's idea that knowledge does not only reside in archives — but in the repertoire of embodied practices. Through listening, recording, and animating, we sought to honour these embodied knowledges — not to fix them, but to let them continue moving."

*"Embodied memory, because it is performed, is also vulnerable to change and forgetting." (Taylor, 2003, p. 20)*

**Slide 5 – AR**

 "Here you can see one of the symbols created for the AR experience. The animations that emerge are not polished simulations — they are intentionally hand-drawn, textured, incomplete. As Trinh T. Minh-ha reminds us, the fragment, the gap, the unfinished are essential to telling true stories — stories that resist closure."

*"There is no story that is not fragmented." (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 145)*

**Slide 6**

 "Unravel was not my project alone. It was, and continues to be, an evolving collective effort — from weavers to animators, sound artists to AR designers.

It embodies Jane Bennett's idea of 'vibrant matter' — the sense that not only humans, but materials themselves — the cotton, the threads, the earth — are active participants in knowledge creation."

*"Thing-power gestures toward the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects." (Bennett, 2010, p. 17)*

**Slide 7 – Weaving**

 "The backstrap loom — one of the oldest weaving techniques in the world — became central to our practice. There is something deeply humbling in seeing how, through tension and release, the simplest materials can hold complex stories. Here, Karen Barad's idea of entanglement comes alive: the threads, the hands, the technology — none exist independently."

*"Relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions." (Barad, 2007, p. 140)*

**Slide 8 – Symbolism**

"Each pattern, each woven square, was carefully designed to hold a fragment of the women's journeys. In scanning them through AR, visitors are not just passive viewers; they become co-weavers of the stories, participating in an unfolding, embodied documentary experience."

*"Knowledge is generated in the act of doing, in the reactivation and transmission of embodied memory." (Taylor, 2003, p. 20)*

**Slide 9 – Exhibition**

"Unravel launched on International Women's Day in Nepal — with 24 tapestries, a 16-metre rug, and an augmented reality layer bringing the women's voices into the space. Later, we shared the project at exhibitions in Utrecht and London.

But beyond exhibitions, it was always about asking: how do we create ways of knowing that honour complexity, vulnerability, and more-than-human entanglements?"

*"To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence." (Barad, 2007, p. ix)*

**Slide 10 – Story**

 "And so I'd like to invite you to pause for a moment. As the next soundscape plays — composed by Himal Thapa — I invite you to think of a woman in your life who has overcome challenges. Let her story weave into this space for the next 30 seconds."

*"Hope gives us a sense that there is a point to working things out, working things through." (Ahmed, 2017, p. 3)*

**Slide 11** [Pause: Play the sketch and soundscape (Slide 11) for 30 seconds]

**Slide 12 – Reflection slide**

"Thank you. If we had more time, I would ask each of you to share that story. Because, as Sara Ahmed reminds us, feminism is not only about grand gestures, but about the everyday labour of holding each other up — of making space for each other's survival and flourishing."

*"Feminism needs to be everywhere because feminism is not everywhere." (Ahmed, 2017, p. 4)*

**Slide 13 – Jouney**

"Unravel continues to grow — not as a finished piece, but as a living archive, woven from acts of telling, acts of listening.

In resisting the polished certainties of algorithmic truth, it embraces what Sheena Wilson calls 'ecological thinking' — recognising that sustainability is not just about materials, but about relationships: with land, with stories, with each other."

*"Energy transition is not only about new technologies, but about returning to older ways of living and valuing community, land, and interdependence." (Wilson et al., 2017, p. 7)*

**Slide 14 – Texture** \*Clip

"And so, Unravel is not about rescuing anyone. It is about making spaces where small steps — small threads — can connect across difference. Where craft, technology, and storytelling can work together to transform, quietly and persistently, the texture of our realities."

"Knowledge is generated through a web of relations and interconnections." (Barad, 2007, p. 393)

**Slide 15 – Closing**

"I'll end with this: Knowledge is not something we extract, own, or archive. It is something we participate in, shape, and are shaped by — again and again, in each small act of care, each story told, each thread woven."

*"Participation is not a choice but a condition of existence." (Barad, 2007, p. 392)*

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**Extended Link**

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