

BODY/LAND

Feature Documentary
Directed by Siân A. Williams

A SLANTWISE STUDIO
PRODUCTION

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT





LOGLINE:

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE ARCHIVES AND LANDSCAPES THAT SHAPE OUR QUEER LIVES.

SYNOPSIS:

BODY/LAND is an 88-minute experimental documentary combining audiovisual archive remix, care-led interviews and collaborative performance.

Exploring queer and trans absence within regional film archives, the film remixes moving image collections from the North West Film Archive, reorientating archival footage beyond institutional categories and reshaping how queer histories can be encountered.

These archival interventions intertwine with intimate collaborations featuring five artists whose practices span photography, sculpture, spoken word, music and performance. Together they reflect on identity, landscape, memory and belonging, moving beyond familiar narratives of coming out or transition towards a more expansive language of BODY(s) and LAND(s).

CREDITS:

Director: Siân A. Williams
Produced by: Slantwise Studio

Featured Artists:
Janina Sabaliauskaite
Avadrian Night
E.M. Parry
Ro Robertson
Snuggle Ninja

Archive Footage:
North West Film Archive

Original Score:
Siân A. Williams & Katie Chatburn

Specially Featured Music:
Snuggle Ninja



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I spent years making *Rebel Dykes* (2021) around my full-time job as a film archivist. As co-director, I'd already begun developing playful, and sometimes more embedded ways of recreating missing archives on screen.

BODY/LAND started as a problem that kept bubbling away in my head. I couldn't stop thinking about how absent ordinary queer domestic lives are from film archive collections, and how so much queer and trans representation had been forced to counter the exploitative reality television of the early 2000s and 2010s.

What *BODY/LAND* became is this reorientated archive mixtape. In some ways, I think of it as a batshit autistic fever dream, traversing queer time and space, and even the different audiovisual eras of documenting ourselves. I wanted to privilege co-created self-representation over outsider interpretations made primarily to explain us to some imagined universal baseline of a "straight audience". As queer and trans people, we've grown so very tired of that.

The interviews became spaces of care and connection, where I could spend time collaborating with each artist in their chosen environment.

The remix sequences became even more personal, creating spaces where gestures of queer life found in the archive could intersect with footage that has never been catalogued as "queer" at all. The interviews sit between reorientated and layered sequences of Lancashire hillsides, "witch" ancestors, mill workers, queer ecologies and the joy of chosen family, allowing these histories, landscapes and bodies to speak to one another.

I was influenced by works such as Helen Chadwick's *Viral Landscapes* (1988), Derek Jarman's *The Angelic Conversation* (1985), Barbara Hammer's *Nitrate Kisses* (1992), and Agnès Varda's *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008). I composed the original score, with half of the compositions created in collaboration with sound artist/composer/orchestrator Katie Chatburn.

The score blends John Carpenter-esque analogue synths, the meditative static atmosphere of David Lynch's soundscapes, with the post-punk and post-industrial melodies of New Order, and the fractured glitch break beats of Aphex Twin.



FEATURED ARTISTS

Together their practices span sculpture, photography, spoken word, music and live performance, creating a collective portrait of contemporary queer creativity.

Rather than conventional talking-head interviews, each artist became an active collaborator in shaping how they wished to appear on screen and how to collaborate through performance.



Ro Robertson
rorobertson.studio



Snuggle Ninja
snuggleninja.bandcamp.com





ABOUT THE ARCHIVE

Working closely with the North West Film Archive, BODY/LAND draws on regional moving image collections to explore different ways of telling queer stories through the archive.

At the heart of the film are the personal Super 8 home movies of Oscar-nominated animator Paul Berry. The Paul Berry Collection offers a rare glimpse into queer domestic life through personal home movies. Berry began his career as a stop-motion animator at Cosgrove Hall, working on *The Wind in the Willows*, before moving to Hollywood to animate on films including *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. After his death in 2001, his partner donated the collection to the North West Film Archive so these vital records of their lives together could be preserved and shared.

Friends picnicking together, rural trips, birthdays and everyday moments of chosen family shouldn't feel remarkable, yet these kinds of images remain strikingly absent from many film archive collections. Berry's collection is therefore a sadly rare example of queer domestic life preserved within a regional archive.

Rather than using archival footage to simply 'show and tell', BODY/LAND remixes Paul Berry's home movies alongside other regional archive collections, newly filmed interviews and collaborative performances.

Gestures of queer life found in the archive sit alongside footage that has never been catalogued or understood as linked to LGBTQ+ experience, creating new conversations between landscape, memory and queer lived experience. In doing so, the film asks not only what histories survive in the archive to be categories as 'queer', but how the archive itself can be reorientated to expand our understanding of queerness on film.





DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Siân A. Williams (they/them) is a filmmaker, archivist and has recently completed their NWCDTP-funded PhD in Documentary Filmmaking at the School of Digital Arts (SODA), Manchester Metropolitan University. Their practice explores queer heritage through experimental documentary, audiovisual archives and collaborative filmmaking.

Williams co-directed feature documentary *Rebel Dykes* (2021), which was Scottish BAFTA-nominated, Iris Prize-winning, longlisted for a BIFA for Best Editing, and shortlisted for the Raindance Discovery Award.

Throughout their career, they have worked across film and sound archives, contributing to national projects with the BFI and regional projects with the British Library. Alongside their doctoral research, they worked as Project Manager at Queer Britain and as a Researcher and Facilitator at the North West Film Archive, developing collaborative approaches to preserving and reimagining LGBTQ+ histories.

Their work brings together filmmaking, archival practice and queer heritage to create new ways of imagining how histories can be preserved, remixed and shared.

RESPONSE TO BODY/LAND:

"Stunning work... getting to the tender wet guts, boulders and cosmos of queer artists and their landscapes. When this new doc comes out, go find it and slosh around in it with your arms, ears, eyes and mouths open."

— S. L. Grange

"What an exhilarating joy to spend time in the company of BODY/LAND: to immerse myself in the work, the care, the wisdom of these artists, and in the landscapes they call home. This is a precious pebble of a film, something to put in your pocket and turn over and over as you relive its poetry, its thoughtfulness, its queer abandon. I can still taste the salt on my tongue."

— Kit Heyam

"A beautiful, complex journey into various landscapes, BODY/LAND both poses the question of where the queer archive exists and becomes a part of the archive itself."

— Marlowe Mitchell

CONTACT:

Slantwise Studio

www.slantwisestudio.com

Instagram: @slantwisestudio

sian.a.williams@gmail.com

www.sianawilliams.com

Instagram: @sianyriot

FESTIVALS:

Fringe! Queer Film & Arts Fest

(World Premiere - opening night film)

Fri 11th September book:

<https://www.fringefilmfest.com/>

