

# Interactive Documentary, Intervention and Social Activism – commentary on LGBTIQ+ representation, identity and audiences

A panel presentation with Dr Natalie Krikowa and Dr Evangeline Aguas  
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## **Abstract:**

This presentation contributes to this year's conference theme, the future of screen education and research, through a discussion of how interactive documentaries (i-docs) can be used for intervention and social activism within and about the screen media industries. I-docs are an innovative hybrid form of storytelling, garnering significance among immersive media of the twenty-first century. The convergence of the personal computer, mobile communication technologies and accessible media production tools has provided vast potential for counter-hegemonic discourse and an incentive for creative expression by minority practitioners. While i-docs can take on many forms integrating elements from film, journalism and digital games, the accessibility of Internet as a distribution platform, enables creative practitioners to distribute their stories with fewer to no restrictions or gatekeepers. By situating these stories outside of mainstream screen media (TV and film), i-docs can act as commentary on contemporary screen media issues, while also making them accessible to a wider range of audiences. This presentation uses two i-docs centred on LGBTIQ+ identity and representation, Evangeline Aguas' *Queer Interruptions* ([www.queerinterruptions.com](http://www.queerinterruptions.com), 2021) and Natalie Krikowa's *All Our Lesbians Are Dead!* (link TBC, 2023).

In *Queer Interruptions*, queer female and genderqueer TV fans discuss how they experience queer time: in what ways they feel out-of-sync or delayed compared to their heterosexual peers; in what ways they feel backward while LGBTQ+ rights advance forward; and how they envision a queer future for themselves. This online creative work disseminates the research beyond the academic community, ensuring accessibility for international fan audiences and those with financial or privacy concerns. Through its subject content and design, the i-doc appeals to a media-savvy and politically inclined online fan community focused on education, social justice, and solidarity-building. The work is primarily image-based, utilising streaming video and animation to align the project with the online fan community's ethos and aesthetics. Further fostering the participatory ethic of online fan culture, the website's non-linear navigation allows for interactive meaning-making as users make their own path through the documentary videos and interview quotes, creating their own narrative connections and appointing users as co-producers of meaning.

In *All Our Lesbians Are Dead!*, academics, filmmakers, and media professionals discuss the 'bury your gays' trope, which sees queer characters being killed off television shows disproportionately to their heterosexual counterparts and often in extremely violent ways. The i-doc discusses the historical and contemporary nature of the trope and the trauma it inflicts on queer audiences. Through the use of a nodal structure and short videos, users are able to explore the content by theme, issue or topic, or use the interactive timeline to see how the trope has evolved. This creative practice work ensures that along with the academic community, media professionals, media students and media audiences can better understand these issues and contribute to the provision of safer screen media experiences for LGBTIQ+ audiences.

**Bios:**

**Dr Natalie Krikowa** is a media scholar and creative practice researcher at the University of Technology Sydney. She holds a Doctor of Creative Arts in media and cultural studies and a Master of Creative Writing. Her research focuses on issues of media representation and identity politics in screen studies, popular culture, and transmedia, particularly how it relates to LGBTIQ+ people, audiences, and communities. In addition to this, she works as the Creative Director of Zenowa Productions, writing and producing queer female focused works including *The Newtown Girls* (2012) and *All Our Lesbians Are Dead!* (2017, 2023).

**Dr Evangeline Aguas** (she/her) completed her PhD at the University of Technology Sydney. With a background in film and television production, her interdisciplinary research aims to combine the fields of queer theory, digital media, and fan studies with creative practice. Her PhD was a non-traditional thesis and ethnographic study on how queer female and genderqueer fans experience queer temporalities, capturing abstraction and lived experience through documentary form.