

Press Information—*Burton Before and After*  
An intimate portrait of transition, memory, and friendship.



**Specifications**

Year of completion: 2017

Year of release: 2018

Genre: Documentary

Running time: 15 minutes

Format: HD Video (1920x1080), 24fps

Audio: Stereo

Language: English

Closed Captions: Available

**Contact**

Courtney Hermann

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**Credits**

A production of Boxcar Assembly, LLC

Co-Directed by Courtney Hermann and Kerribeth Elliott

Camera and Sound by Courtney Hermann and Kerribeth Elliott

Edited by Kerribeth Elliott

Music by Bell Plaines

**Trailer**

<https://vimeo.com/267027908>

**Project Website**

<https://www.boxcarassembly.com/burton-before-and-after>

## **Loglines**

1. Ever want to go back in time to meet your previous self? Burton puts his truth before his fear in this portrait of transition, memory, and friendship.
2. Fifteen years after Burton began his gender-affirming transition, he receives an invitation from a friend to view a cache of home video footage documenting those uncertain early days.

## **Synopses**

1. Fifteen years after Burton began his gender-affirming transition, his longtime friend Courtney calls him up with news that she has uncovered a cache of home video footage from that time period.

In the wake of greater transgender awareness in the dominant culture, Courtney proposes that they go on-camera to revisit the old footage together. Burton worries about outing himself to co-workers who are unaware of his gender reassignment and declines Courtney's proposition.

But after the election of the 45th President of the United States, Burton changes his mind and his fear is no longer as important as his truth.

*Burton Before and After* is an intimate portrait of transition, memory, and friendship.

2. Fifteen years after Burton's gender-affirming transition, his longtime friend Courtney uncovers a cache of home video from that time period and invites him to go on-camera to revisit the old footage together. Concerned about outing himself to co-workers unaware of his gender reassignment, Burton initially declines, until he has a change of heart—deciding that truth is more important than fear.

3. Fifteen years after Burton's gender-affirming transition, his longtime friend and filmmaker Courtney invites him over to re-visit footage she had shot during this period of Burton's life. After first declining, Burton ultimately decides to partake in Courtney's experiment, which shines a loving light on the past as it relates to present-day awareness and courage.

## **Director's Bio**

Courtney Hermann is an independent documentary filmmaker and an Assistant Professor of Film at Portland State University. Her most recent independent films include *BURTON BEFORE AND AFTER* (2017), *CRYING EARTH RISE UP* (2015), *EXOTIC WORLD AND THE BURLESQUE REVIVAL* (2012), and *STANDING SILENT NATION* (2007). She is a co-owner of Boxcar Assembly, a full service production company specializing in non-fiction work for governmental and non-profit organizations. Courtney co-authored the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of *Directing the Documentary*, available in May 2020.

## **Director's Statement**

Documentary has something of a reputation for being a bummer—or at least maligned for habitually addressing topics and stories that are “depressing” in nature—and queer-themed documentaries may be even more so. And while I have made films that would fall into this category, I also strive to uplift—while hopefully avoiding cliché or sentimentality—even as these films might tell a story of struggle, decay, or injustice.

*Burton Before and After* takes as its subject my best friend's gender affirming transition and to a lesser degree, it's about our friendship. It is poignant, sweet, intimate, and even funny at times. The filmmaking itself models, perhaps, an alternative way of approaching a queer subject and producing queer content because it is collaborative, renders Burton as an evolving person not fixed in time, and pulls back the curtain on process via a self-reflexive point of view.

Specifically, sharing non-normative, unconventional documentary stories about trans identities dislodges the objectifying view of the makeover video, the tragedy/pain narrative, or the inspirational story meant to hearten non-queer audiences, which have historically dominated the trans documentary landscape.

## **Comments About the Film**

“The early footage is tender. Burton speaks gently, like everything is raw. And Courtney speaks carefully, like she's holding space for something precious and uncertain—for something you both know and don't know. They do a precarious dance of becoming and they are clearly doing it as a family.

The present-day footage is very different. Burton and Courtney are so much more solidly themselves. Contrasted with the tentativeness of the early footage, the present-day footage feels deeply grounding--allowing the viewer to anchor themselves in that strength and watch these tender things taking place. The power of the film comes from that tenderness and strength.

There is nothing threatening about Burton—not in his youthful becoming or in his fully formed adulthood. It is nearly impossible not to want to embrace the first or laugh with the second.

In an atmosphere of fear and bathroom bills and bans, the portrait painted undercuts all of that by being deeply, sweetly human.”

--Jennifer Ball, parent of a non-binary child

## **Reviews**

Film Threat

<http://filmthreat.com/reviews/burton-before-and-after/>

## **Awards**

Social Impact Award at the Wandering Reel Traveling Film Festival (2020).

Best Short Film at the North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (2019).

Put Eyes on What's Working Award at the Film Festival at Brown's Point (Tacoma) (2019).

Audience Award for Best Short at Olympia Film Festival (2018).

Portland Focused Film Award at Portland Film Festival (2018).

Audience Award for Best Transgender Short Film at TWIST (Seattle Queer Film Festival) (2018).

Audience Favorite at Cinema Diverse (Palm Springs LGBTQ Film Festival) (2018).

Best Trans Documentary at the Trans Stellar Film Festival (2018).