



Zen & the Art of Dying

A feature-length documentary by Broderick Fox
Produced, directed, shot, and edited by Broderick Fox
Featuring Zenith Virago & the community of Byron Bay, Australia
Sound Design by Scott Johnson
Original Music by Ronit Kirchman
Executive Producer Lee Biolos
Associate producers Michele Bornheim and Debra Beattie
74 min 20 sec USA/Australia
Exhibition formats: DCP, Blu-Ray, digital file.
(stereo and 5.1 surround sound options, closed captioning)
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Contact: Lee Biolos, Executive Producer zenandtheartofdying@gmail.com

Full Presskit: <http://zenandtheartofdying.com/press-materials>

Select Press Coverage: <http://zenandtheartofdying.com/coverage>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/broderickfox/zentrailer>

Preview Scene: <https://vimeo.com/broderickfox/zenpreview>

Hi-res Photos: <http://flickr.com/zenandtheartofdying>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ZenArtOfDying>

“This story of bereavement and self-empowerment is what Broderick Fox does best.”
Giuliana Cincotta – *Film Ink*

“It's such a powerful and enlightening film, and we can't wait to help share it with the world.”
Elizabeth Mims – *Austin Film Festival Senior Programmer*

“Openly gay documentary filmmaker Broderick Fox goes places others might not wish to venture, and does it with heart and grace.”
Kilian Melloy – *Edge Media Network*

Release: After an international festival run, and theatrical release in Australia and New Zealand, *Zen & the Art of Dying* is now available for global digital rental and purchase via Vimeo on Demand and Amazon Video Direct, Full release details at <http://zenandtheartofdying.com/watch>

Logline: *Zen & the Art of Dying* is a portrait of Zenith (Zen) Virago, Australia's premiere 'deathwalker' whose personal and professional experiences challenge our core assumptions about life and dissolve our fears around death.

Synopsis: From her origins as a young mother in the UK, to her present day identity as a lesbian, activist, and self-described deathwalker in the idyllic seaside town of Byron Bay, Australia, Zenith (Zen) Virago's personal and professional experiences quietly challenge our core assumptions about life and dissolve our fears around death. The most sought-after marriage celebrant in an increasingly commercialized wedding destination town, Zenith is also co-founder of the Australian Natural Death Care Centre, an organization that provides end-of-life decision planning and DIY funeral alternatives to residents of Australia's North Coast. Zenith's work models a grassroots international Natural Death Care Movement that is gaining momentum as Baby Boomers begin to retire and are demanding more personalized, empowered, and meaningful choices around end-of-life matters, just as they did with the natural childbirth movement. Her example, and the willingness of Byron Shire's citizens to join her cause, invite each of us to reexamine and reclaim a more active role in how we live, love, and die.

About Broderick Fox: Broderick Fox's award-winning fictional, experimental, and documentary works present challenging, socially relevant issues through accessible, character-driven storytelling and have screened in over 70 international festivals as well as on PBS in the US, and Danish Television. Broderick received a Special Recognition Award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and a Dore Schary Award from the Anti-Defamation League for his co-directed first feature *Tak For Alt: Survival of a Human Spirit*. His second feature documentary [*The Skin I'm In*](#) won the Special Jury Prize at the Arizona International Film Festival, Best Feature and Best in Fest at the Tattoo Arts Film Festival and was a Juror's Pick at the Victoria International Film Festival. [*Zen & the Art of Dying*](#) was selected as a showcase "Heart of Film" project at the Austin Film Festival and the Closing Night Gala film of the Byron Bay International Film Festival and continues to be utilized by a range of community groups and death care workers as an educational tool. [*Manscaping*](#), his fourth feature documentary project was the Uplift Award Winner at the Geelong Pride Film Festival, Best Documentary Winner at ReelQ Pittsburgh, and has screened internationally at 40+ festival and institutional selections including BFI FLARE London, Outfest, Queerscreen Sydney Mardi Gras, GAZE Dublin, Queer Lisboa, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. Fox is a two-time recipient of Artistic Innovation Grants from the Center for Cultural Innovation. He is the James Irvine Professor of Media Arts & Culture at Occidental College in Los Angeles. His book, *Documentary Media: History - Theory - Practice* is out now through Routledge Press.

Director's Statement: I met Zenith at the Byron Bay International Film Festival's world premiere of my last feature documentary *The Skin I'm In* (2012). She was an audience member who approached me after the screening, and our shared sensibilities and interests quickly and deeply connected us. I had been thinking and writing critically about digital media production as a means of illness or injury-related pain management, bereavement, and empowerment in end-of-life decision-making, so the chance to document her work as a deathwalker felt like a natural, exciting, and passionate next step in my filmmaking. I often call my production works "embodied" media for their address of gender, sexuality, addiction, body dysmorphia, fantasy, illness, and other frequent sites of cultural shame and bodily taboo. My use of character-driven storytelling and a range of unexpected aesthetic modes both embrace and challenge documentary form and function, yet permit audiences to deeply identify with challenging perspectives and subject matters traditionally excised from mainstream media. The production crew for *Zen & the Art of Dying* consisted only of myself as cinematographer/director and my partner Lee Biolos as sound recordist/producer. With this small footprint, we embedded with Zenith for 5 weeks during which she and the community of Byron Bay offered us access to some of their most intimate and vulnerable moments. The experience was both humbling and inspiring, and it is my hope that the natural death care movement they exemplify will similarly inspire other individuals and communities to join in 'doing death differently.'

Select Screenings:

Official Selection, Closing Night Film, Director's Pick, Byron Bay International Film Festival—Byron Bay, Australia, March 2015

Official Selection, Festival Favorite, Cinema Diverse: Palm Springs LGBTQ Film Festival—Palm Springs, CA, USA September 2015

Official Selection, Heart of Film Program: Austin Film Festival—Austin, Texas, USA, November 2015

Official Selection, Santa Fe Film Festival—Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, December 2015

Curated Selection, Morbid Anatomy Museum—Brooklyn, New York, USA, January 2016

Curated Selection, KINO 43 Screening Series—Prague, Czech Republic, February 2016

Curated Selection, 'Živica powered by ZSE' sustainability screening: Pohoda Festival—Trencin, Slovakia, July 2016

Curated Selection, Pasatiempo Stay-at-Home Film Festival—Santa Fe, New Mexico/Online, April 2020

Curated Selection, Dying to Know Film Festival—Hudson, NY, August 2023

#DoDeathDifferently