

About the Project

Deface Section 28 is a participatory art project inviting LGBTQIA+ people and allies to creatively respond to the text of Section 28.

Participants are invited to alter, obscure, annotate, cut, repair, destroy, perform, wear or transform the document in any way that feels meaningful to them.

The project asks what happens when a legal text associated with queer silence becomes a surface for expression, memory, anger, care, resistance and visibility.

Deface Section 28 began during a studio practice module as part of my Creative and Therapeutic Arts studies at the University of South Wales.

While exploring ideas of place and space, I encountered Barbara Walker's *Burden of Proof*. Walker superimposes intimate portraits over dehumanising state documents, placing human presence directly over bureaucratic systems that have attempted to suppress and diminish Black lives. Her work offered me a powerful conceptual starting point for reclaiming space from the systems that seek to contain us.

Section 28 was an administrative act of censorship designed to enforce queer silence. Initially, I planned to paint my own self-portrait over the legal text as an act of personal reclamation.

However, as I began working with the document, borrowing Walker's formal approach no longer felt right. The text itself provoked an immediate emotional response. Rather than carefully working within another artist's visual language, I felt compelled to disrupt, obscure and deface the words with intuitive authentic expression.

The act was unexpectedly cathartic.

I printed multiple copies of the document and continued to work over them, discovering a sense of release with each mark. This led me to wonder: could other people experience a similar therapeutic liberation through this act too?

That question transformed the project.

Section 28 was a systemic act of silencing that affected generations of LGBTQIA+ people. No single image, story or response could contain its many legacies of grief, anger, resistance, survival and identity.

At this point, I was inspired by Sophie Calle's *Prenez soin de vous* (Take Care of Yourself). Following a painful breakup, Calle shared the text of an email with 107 women and invited each of them to interpret it through her own creative practice. By sharing a private burden, Calle transformed an individual experience into a collective process of response and meaning-making.

I wanted to explore what might happen if this approach was applied to Section 28.

Deface Section 28 is an open invitation to respond directly to the words of the law. You might paint over them, rewrite them, obscure them, tear them, annotate them, or use them as a starting point for something entirely your own.

Here, defacing is not destruction.

It is reclamation.

By placing creative expression over a text created to enforce silence, we can strip it of its authority and return agency to the people who have lived with its consequences.

Each contribution becomes part of an evolving, participatory archive: a collective body of work made from many different responses, experiences and perspectives.

Together, these contributions create a space where queer stories are not silenced, hidden or written over.

They take up space.

They are witnessed

And they are shared in solidarity.