



ED WEBB-INGALL

We have rather been invaded

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Studio Voltaire OFFSITE

Studio Voltaire has commissioned British filmmaker Ed Webb-Ingall to undertake a project which looks at the impact and legacy of *Section 28*, partnering with the British Film Institute and METRO.

2016 marks 30 years since, in 1986, a group of North London parents began making complaints against what was arguably the first English language children's book to depict homosexuality. *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bösche (1983) depicted the life of 5-year-old Jenny living with her father and his boyfriend. Initially, the group demanded the book's removal from the school syllabus. The protest then escalated to a series of local and national street demonstrations, both for and against the book.

By the end of 1986, Lord Halsbury tabled a Local Government Act in the House of Lords in order to 'refrain local authorities and schools from promoting homosexuality or the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. This act was to become law on the 24th May 1988 as *Section 28* of the Local Government Act. Its passing led to sanctioned institutional discrimination and censorship. Against a backdrop of AIDS and HIV, a renewed level of homophobia in the mainstream media and society at large was prompted. The act galvanized the gay community, leading to the formation of gay rights groups such as Stonewall and an unprecedented level of protest.

We have rather been invaded takes a key moment of protest as its focus – the invasion of a broadcast of the BBC Six O'Clock news on May 23rd 1988, the night before *Section 28* became law, by four lesbians protesting against *Section 28*. This event entered the public imagination at the time with BBC broadcaster Sue Lawley stating "we have rather been invaded", as she continued to read the news whilst the 'invaders' handcuffed themselves to studio equipment. Meanwhile, the women's voices echoed throughout the studio as they repeatedly and loudly demanded: "STOP SECTION 28... SCRAP SECTION 28!" The action was subsequently reported on and interpreted for the Ten O'Clock news on the BBC and ITN news the same night, as well as in national papers the following day, who took the event as an opportunity to deploy a series of satirical headlines.

In response to this protest act, Webb-Ingall will work with a group of 15 LGBTQ+ young people to collate visual and textual material and collaboratively produce a new film. The group will consist of 16 – 25 year olds, who in 1986 were not yet born to witness the 'invasion' first-hand, but can now register the weighted relevance and significance of the event. Their research will delve into queer archives, graphic and typographic design as well as performance and writing exercises, in order to create visual manifestations and interpretations to further their understanding and interpretation of the 1988 protest act. In enacting archival material, the group and film will interrogate past and present recollections of this defining historical moment. Webb-Ingall will carry out video interviews with those who were working in the public sector during *Section 28*, including librarians, teachers and council workers, to investigate the impact of *Section 28* on people's working lives.

The resulting film will explore the invasion and its representation as a form of collective action against *Section 28*, addressing in particular:

1. What did the 'invasion' represent in terms of collective action against a law that prohibited local authorities in England and Wales from 'promoting' homosexuality and also labelled gay family relationships as 'pretend'.
2. How might the making of a single screen video operate as way to represent and remember *Section 28*?
3. How the production of a video acts as a means to develop a methodology to negotiate the intricacies of working with historical moments and material which has personally affected those involved with the production.

The single screen video will present the stories, experiences and oral histories of individuals in relation to *Section 28* and the historic 'lesbian invasion' event. Elements of the resulting film will be presented at Studio Voltaire during Sharon Hayes' forthcoming exhibition *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You*, 15 April – 05 June 2016.

Sharon Hayes is a Philadelphia-based artist and political activist; she uses photography, film, video, sound, and performance to examine the intersection between the personal and the political. An established line of enquiry throughout her multi-disciplinary practice is the transformative power of language. Hayes pays particular attention to the language of twentieth-century protest groups, investigating the history and construction of collective subject formation. She invites viewers and participants to re-experience moments of political and cultural oppression by staging protests, delivering speeches, and re-performing demonstrations. Through these methods of enactment Hayes is engaging in what she calls 'oral translation'. Her work highlights the friction between common activities and personal actions – examining how the collective imaginary is built.

About the filmmaker

Ed Webb-Ingall is a filmmaker and writer with an interest in exploring practices and forms of collaboration. He is currently a TECHNE PhD candidate at Royal Holloway University, Surrey, where his research focuses on the history and practice of community video in the UK between 1968 and 1981. Recent projects have been with The Showroom, Open School East, Tokyo Wonder Site, Echo Park Film Center, no.w.here, Tate Liverpool, LUX and The British Film Institute. He co-edited a book on the filmmaker Derek Jarman, published by Thames and Hudson in September 2013.