

09 MAY - 01 AUG 2026

*THE PANSIES*  
A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE



# *THE PANSIES*

## *A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE*

These images represent twenty one years of planting at sites of homophobia and transphobia as part of The Pansy Project, which I began in Manchester in 2005. These sixty images are just a fraction of the more than 320 individual plantings. This selection of images was originally gathered for an exhibition at Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool in January 2026.

Each tells a story of intolerance and hatred, some flippant or even silly, others reflect the most vicious, sometimes fatal, violence.

My selection aims to capture the geographical spread of The Pansy Project across the UK, Europe, and North America, from the first planting in Manchester to one of my more recent plantings in London in 2025, where I now live.

In this document, I offer some context for the locations and share a selection of stories behind the plantings. Also included are images that didn't make the final selection, including "I think he's a queer! Shall we kill him?" St Ann's Square, Manchester (right), planted for my own experience in 2005. For this exhibition a portrait taken in 2011 by photographer Malc Stone, is also included, I explore the story and legacy of this image on page 22-27.

In the more recent cases, short films expand on the narratives behind the work, available to view for free via my website: [thepansyproject.com](http://thepansyproject.com)



"I think he's a queer! Shall we kill him?"  
St Ann's Square, Manchester, UK

**MAKE  
THE**

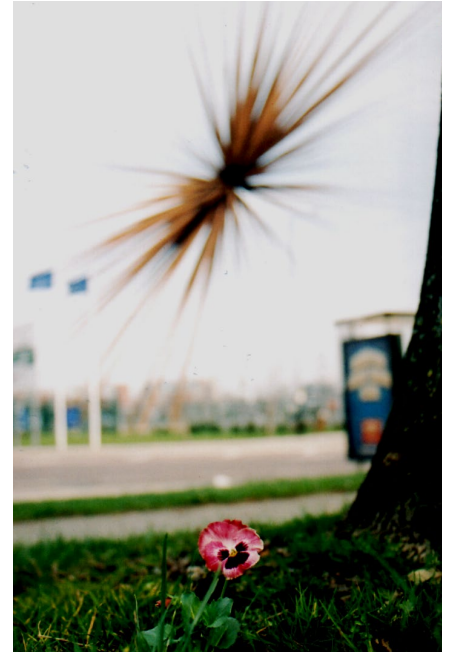
**WORD  
RING**



"I think it's about time we went gay bashing again, isn't it?" Grosvenor Street, Manchester, UK



"Indistinct abuse, stone throwing" Gurney Street Manchester, UK



"Y'all right ladies?" *B of the Bang*, Manchester UK

Three experiences of homophobia in one day were the catalyst for The Pansy Project. It began with two builders who, as I walked past, said, "I think it's about time we went gay bashing again, isn't it?" The day continued with a group of jobs hurling abuse at my then boyfriend and me, and ended with a strange, unsettling encounter with a man who muttered "y'all right ladies" under his breath. Although I had grown accustomed to this behaviour, I realised how shocking it remained to those around me. This prompted me to consider the nature of these attacks and their effect on my life, and to explore how I felt at these locations.

I had noticed the significance of roadside floral memorials, but

initially did not want to equate my experience of verbal abuse with a death or tragedy. Instead, I chose to plant a small, unmarked living plant at each site. The choice of plant was crucial. The pansy felt instantly relevant: a term historically used against gay men, but also derived from the French *penser*, meaning "to think." Its bowed head suggests reflection, and its subtle, elegiac quality suited my intent. A plant grows as I do through these experiences. The act of planting felt positive: a quiet comment on the abuse, a potential remedy. Kneeling in the street to dig into neglected hedgerows became a sorrowful, contemplative act. With each planting, I realised these locations had shifted—from sites of hatred to places of resistance.

STREET



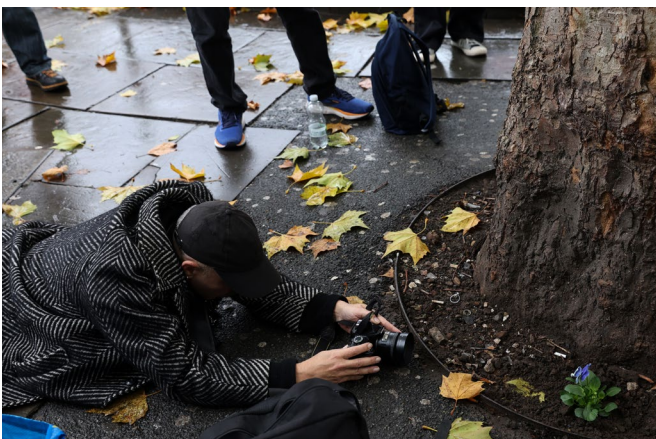


Above, right and below documenting pansies in Brussels, Belgium in 2014 - Photos Wen-Chi Su.

It's not lost on me that the act of planting pansies at these sites is slightly absurd. Kneeling on pavements, in hedgerows, at the edges of roads draws attention. People pass, stare, ask questions, or depending on the location, ignore me entirely. Sometimes I am even mistaken for someone unwell. In Lawrence, Kansas in 2018 the police were called as passing drivers thought I was a dead body on the side of the road. These moments of disruption have become part of the performative nature of the work.



Above, on a planting tour in Graz, Austria in 2012, part of Truth is Concrete.



Above, documenting a pansy in Liverpool in 2025. Photo - Sophie Marie Louise Keough

I have also hosted occasional planting tours, shown above. These small community events bring together the interested to watch me plant, between locations we chat and laugh. I discover the particulars of the place I'm in and stories are shared. This is when a sense of solidarity comes to the fore, and can become unexpectedly moving and joyful. Whilst I'm lying on the ground documenting the planting I hear the conversations of hope swirling around me.

# THE PANSY PROJECT



Beaten, Fleet Street,  
Liverpool, UK

In the first few years of the project, I was fortunate to be invited to share my work at various festivals. Largely, these have been limited to England; in 2009 I was invited to contribute to the Outburst Festival in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Scotland and Wales remain unrepresented in this body of work, a reflection of where I have been funded to attend.

In Manchester, Queer Up North was the first festival to support The Pansy Project and their support inspired the development and growth of the project. Liverpool, via Homotopia Festival, has and continues to be an enthusiastic supporter of my work, reflected in this selection of images. Other English cities and festivals have welcomed The Pansy Project over time, each providing

a distinct context for planting and reflection. These opportunities have shaped not only where the work has been seen, but how it has grown in scale and reach. Each commission allows the exploration of specific LGBTQ+ histories and communities, planting pansies in sites that carry specific social and cultural resonance. While the work remains ephemeral and site-specific, festivals have allowed The Pansy Project to accumulate a wider presence, creating a network of remembrance across England and internationally.



"Do you want to die?" Lime Street Station,  
Liverpool, UK



Punched and kicked  
Moorfields Station, Liverpool, UK

The three plantings above were made in November 2025 in partnership with Homotopia Festival and FACT Liverpool for Remember Nature; a nationwide day of artist-led action to stand up for nature. They mark a wave of reported homophobic and transphobic incidents that occurred in the summer of 2021.

In my photographs I aim to capture local landmarks and architectural details, such as Liverpool Lime Street above and the iconic bridges in Newcastle, below. This helps anchor the interventions in their place, situating the pansy and the crime they mark, within the character of each city I visit.



Attacked, The Quays, Newcastle, UK

# PARADE

In 2015 The Pansy Project was the subject of a documentary filmed in France, commissioned by Canal+ and directed by Jean-Baptiste Erreca: *Les Pensées de Paul* was an award winning feature length documentary that followed my journey meeting various people who had experienced homophobia and transphobia across the country, I heard their stories and planted pansies alongside them. The film supported new plantings during the making of and later as I toured the film across Europe.



Above documenting a planting with a participant from the film in Paris.

The Pansy Project's meaning is not lost when it appears in non-English-speaking countries. As described above, the French origin of the word pansy, adds an additional layer to the reading. In French, the flower is also associated with the phrase "thinking of you," a nuance that does not exist in English. In other languages the flower often carries a different meaning and may require a brief explanation, but this does not weaken the work. Instead, the ritual of the planting becomes more significant.

PARIS



BERLIN



STOCKHOLM

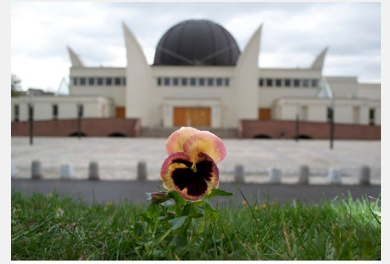


GENEVA



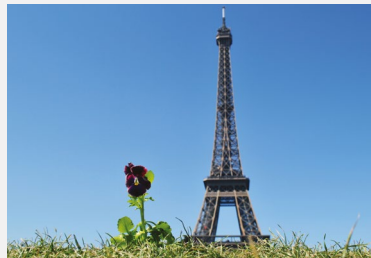
# REPORT

For this display I have chosen to retain the local language recorded, here I've translated the original language of the abuse into English.



« C'est une abomination »  
Grande Mosquée de Strasbourg  
Strasbourg, France

« C'est une abomination »  
» Grande Mosquée de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France. Translation from French to English = "It's an abomination."



« Y'a pas d'ovules dans les testicules »  
Tour Eiffel, Paris, France

« Y'a pas d'ovules dans les testicules »  
Tour Eiffel, Paris, France. Translation from French to English = "There are no eggs in testicles." Often used in a transphobic context.



« Les homos, c'est des pervers, c'est une maladie »  
Place du Molard, Geneva, Switzerland

« Les homos, c'est des pervers, c'est une maladie »  
Place du Molard, Geneva, Switzerland. Translation from French to English = "Gays are perverts, it's a disease."



« Les pédés au bûcher ! »  
Hôtel de Ville, Paris, France

« Les pédés au bûcher ! » Hôtel de Ville, Paris, France. Translation from French to English = “Burn the faggots!”



« Un truc de pédé ! »  
Avenue du Président John F. Kennedy  
Lille, France

« Un truc de pédé ! » Avenue du Président John F. Kennedy, Lille, France. Translation from French to English = “A faggot thing!”



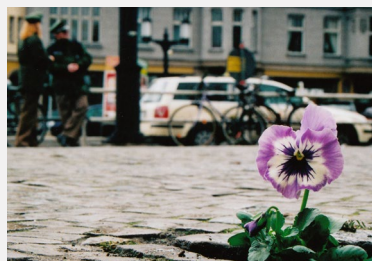
« Sales pédés »  
Beursplein, Brussels, Belgium

« Sales pédés » Beursplein, Brussels, Belgium. Translation from French to English = “Dirty faggots.”



“Jävla böggjäv!”  
Humlegården, Stockholm  
Sweden

“Jävla böggjäv!” Humlegården, Stockholm, Sweden. Translation from Swedish to English = “Fucking faggot.”



„Komm her, ich hau dir ins Gesicht!“  
Sophie-Charlotte-Platz, Berlin, Germany

„Komm her, ich hau dir ins Gesicht!“ Sophie-Charlotte-Platz, Berlin, Germany. Translation from German to English = “Come here, I’ll punch you in the face!”



“Schwein!”  
Graffiti on an LGBT poster  
CERN, Geneva, Switzerland

“Schwein!” Graffiti on an LGBT poster CERN, Geneva, Switzerland. Translation from German to English = “Pig!”

# AMERICAN NORTHERN



For Dwan Prince. "The N\*\*\*\*r is a Faggot!"  
Brownsville, Brooklyn. New York, USA



"Don't ask that guy – he wants to hang them all!" – President Trump comments on Vice Presidents views on gay rights. White House, Washington D.C., USA



For Stonewall.  
Christopher Street, New York USA

The Pansy Project first appeared in the United States in 2006 at the Conflux Festival in New York, where I documented plantings at various locations across the city. Some sites proved difficult to capture with my new SLR camera. In 2019 I returned to New York to replant and re-photograph some of the pansies, including the pansy I re-planted at the Stonewall Inn, above.

In 2018 I visited Washington, D.C., and Lawrence, Kansas in association with the Spencer Museum. In 2019 The Pansy Project was invited to Ottawa, Canada by the Qu'Art Festival. For these North American trips I produced short films that provide additional context and share the stories behind the individual plantings, all are free to view on [thepansyproject.com](http://thepansyproject.com).



"Beaten." Jayhawk Motel, 1004 N 3rd St,  
Lawrence, Kansas, USA



"Nice Shoes!" For Alain Brosseau.  
Alexandra Bridge, Ottawa, Canada

# *THE FALLEN*



For Michael Causer, Tarbock Road, Liverpool, UK

From the beginning of The Pansy Project, I was aware of the harsh reality of homophobically motivated murder. After much thought, I chose to mark these crimes in the same understated way as I mark passing comments, highlighting the homophobic motivation rather than the outcome, which often depends on circumstance. The only difference is in the title: in most cases, I simply dedicate the planting to the person involved.

Such was the case for the pansy above, planted for Michael Causer, a young man from Liverpool murdered in 2008 in a homophobic attack. I planted this pansy in his memory alongside his parents in 2009. It remains one of the most emotional memories of the project and illustrates the quiet power of the idea, particularly when I speak about my work in public settings. On the next page I briefly share some of the other plantings that mark fatal attacks.



David Morley was attacked in 2004 on London's Southbank and died as result of his injuries. The case was particularly poignant as he had survived the 1999 Admiral Duncan bombing, where Morley worked as a barman. Though widely believed to be homophobically motivated, this could not be proven in court; his attackers were convicted of manslaughter.



Jody Dobrowski, was murdered on Clapham Common in London in October 2005. He was beaten to death by two men who targeted him because they believed he was gay. His assailants pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey in 2006 and were sentenced to life imprisonment, with a minimum term of 28 years.



On the morning of 31 October 2001, Michael Hasleden's body was discovered on a beach in Ramsgate, known locally as Undercliff, and was known as a cruising area. A post-mortem examination determined he died from multiple injuries consistent with a severe assault.



Malcolm Benfold was 57 when he was fatally attacked in Blackpool in 2007 in a homophobic assault. His killer, Marc Goodwin, was sentenced to life in prison. The case gained further notoriety when Goodwin married another convicted murderer, Mikhail Gallatinov, in Britain's first same-sex prison wedding in 2015.



During my visit to Ottawa, Canada, in 2019, I encountered the phrase "roll a queer," a term used locally to describe the violent targeting of men perceived to be gay in and around Major's Hill Park in the late 1980s. According to community accounts and press reports, the park—then a known cruising area—became the site of repeated homophobic attacks, including men being chased and pushed over cliffs or rocks.



In August 1989, Alain Brosseau, a man perceived as gay, was assaulted by a group who admitted they were out "to roll a queer." He was thrown from Alexandra Bridge, resulting in his death. Other men were attacked or injured in similar circumstances, highlighting a period of hate-motivated violence that was under-reported at the time. I planted the pansy (above left) for Norman Chenier, who was attacked in 1989 in Major's Hill Park.



Stephen Marquis Perkins was a 21-year-old gay man found fatally shot near the intersection of Galen Street SE and 16th Street SE in Washington, D.C., in June 2015. Police treated the case as a homicide and spoke with his boyfriend as part of the investigation, though they did not immediately classify it as a hate crime.



Tyli'a "NaNa Boo" Mack was a 21-year-old transgender woman who was fatally stabbed on the 200 block of Q Street NW, Washington, D.C., in August 2009. Witnesses reported anti-trans slurs before the attack, and police treated the case as a possible hate crime. The pansy was one of 25 planted in Washington D.C. in 2018, many of which marked homophobic and transphobically motivated murder.



Marsha P. Johnson's death in July 1992 was initially ruled as a suicide after her body was found in the Hudson River. Citing frequent harassment and violence against LGBTQ+ people, particularly trans women of colour, activists suspected foul play and protested the lack of a proper investigation. The case was reopened in 2012 and reclassified as "undetermined," it is still widely believed by activists that she was murdered.



*Pansy!* Manchester Art Gallery  
part of Queer Up North, 2005



In the early years of The Pansy Project there was an appetite for large-scale interventions inspired by the thin pink line installation; ***Pansy!*** Produced for the Queer Up North Festival in Manchester in 2005. The work framed the architectural details of the Manchester Art Gallery and was intended to be a subversion of municipal planting schemes, which are so often associated with the humble pansy. Each pansy included went on to mark a hate crime when the pansies were distributed to attendees at an event later in the festival.



This approach re-emerged in 2007 when The Pansy Project featured at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, where the pansy became an emblem of the festival. Three thousand pansies traced the final route of David Morley along London's South Bank; Morley was murdered in a homophobic attack in 2004.

In Liverpool in November 2007, in association with Homotopia Festival, I created ***Memorial to the Unnamed*** in St John's Gardens. This work drew a line of pansies through the park, guiding the viewer towards a corner where the body of an unnamed man was discovered, believed to be the victim of a hate crime. This act of queering municipal planting schemes within parks and public gardens would later inform the development of The Pansy Project Garden in 2010.

# THE PANSY

The Pansy Project Garden, RHS Hampton  
Court Palace Flower Show, 2010

In 2009 my brother Tom Harfleet and I submitted a design for the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. I was doubtful that a garden exploring the complexities of homophobia would be accepted by what I believed to be a relatively conservative organisation. Despite my reservations, the design was accepted.

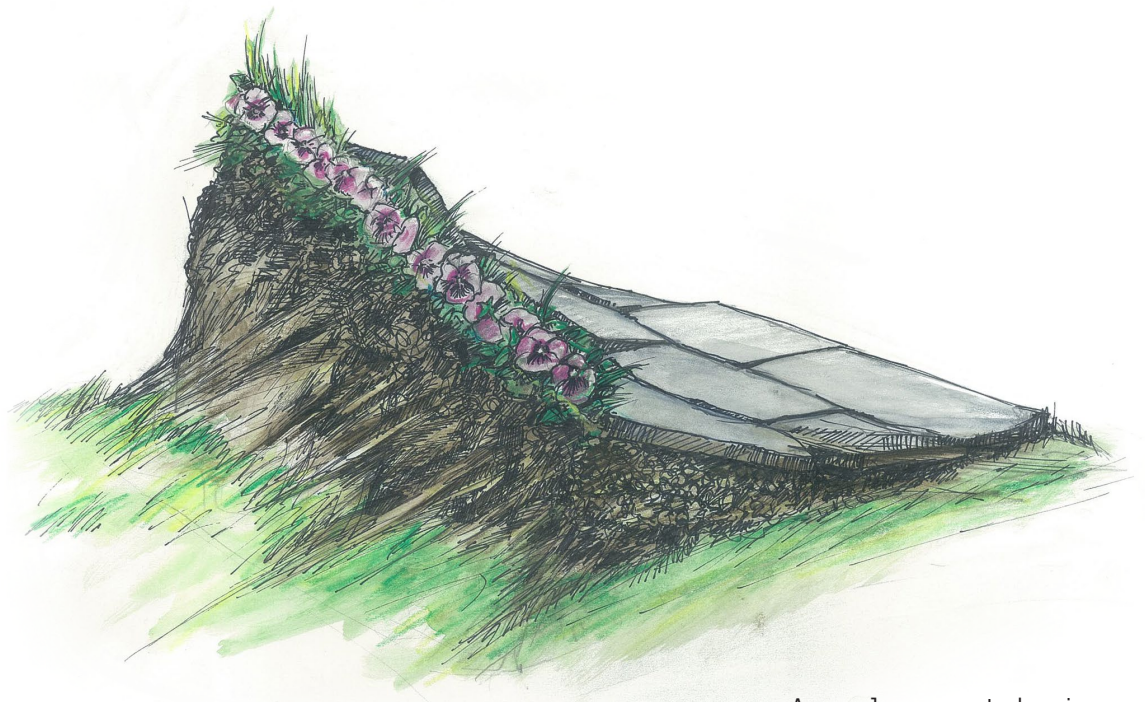


The Pansy Project Garden, RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, 2010

The concrete structure was intended to evoke a cracked pavement and was under planted with 4000 pink pansies, suggesting The Pansy Project's resistance to the damage homophobia can do to the urban environment.

Manning the garden meant that we were effectively 'hosting' flower show visitors, with a responsibility to explain the ideas behind the design. I was deeply moved by the response to the garden and to The Pansy Project more broadly.

The Pansy Project Garden went on to win a Gold Medal and Best Conceptual Garden at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2010.



An early concept drawing of The Pansy Project Garden.

# ARTS PRAYS

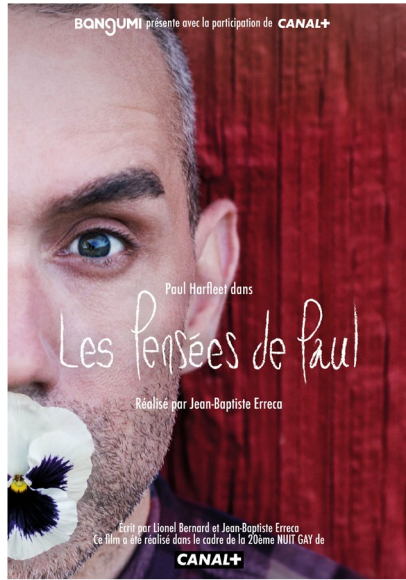
Photograph by  
Malc Stone.

*2011*





*2015*



*2015*



*2015*



*2018*



*2019*



*2023*

In 2011 I was approached by photographer Malc Stone, who wanted to capture the essence of The Pansy Project in a portrait. We discussed how to communicate the core of my work in an image, it was Malc who suggested placing a pansy in my mouth. Abusive comments are spoken or shouted; this gesture redirects that site of expression. There is humour in these portraits. The pansy, held in the mouth, can be read as a dummy or pacifier, an object that interrupts speech and borders on the absurd. It points to the absurdity of homophobia and transphobia themselves, which continue to persist without receding.

This photographic gesture has become a recognisable motif within my work.

In 2015, during the production of Les Pensées de Paul by Bangumi for CANAL+, I suggested the same method to the team as a way of extending the image beyond my own portrait. Photographer Xavier Lahache went on to capture myself, the participants and a number of public figures, including Anggun and Antoine de Caunes. The gesture shifted from a personal device to a shared one, taken up by others in support of the film's challenge to homophobia and transphobia.



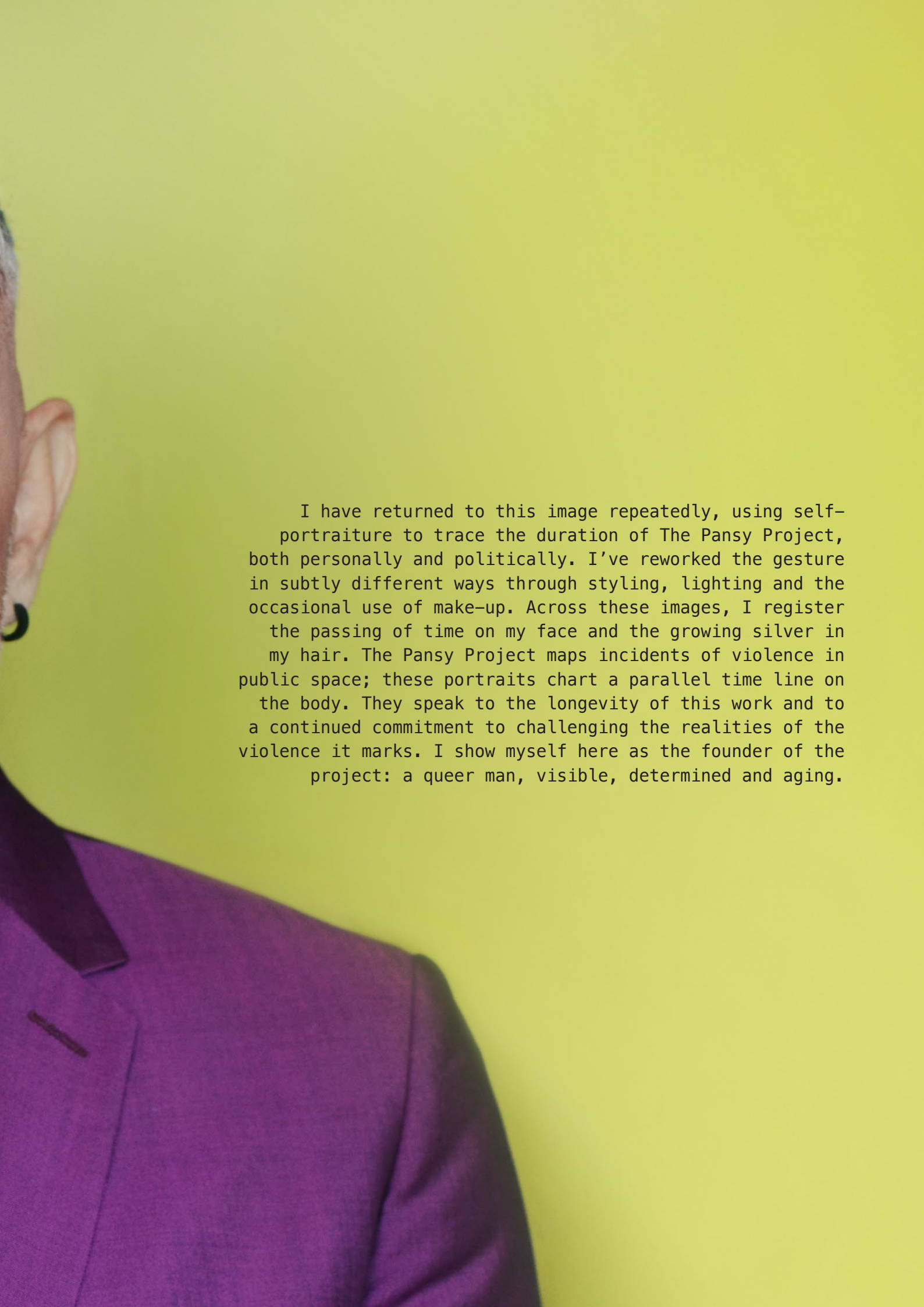
*2023*



2026



2026



I have returned to this image repeatedly, using self-portraiture to trace the duration of The Pansy Project, both personally and politically. I've reworked the gesture in subtly different ways through styling, lighting and the occasional use of make-up. Across these images, I register the passing of time on my face and the growing silver in my hair. The Pansy Project maps incidents of violence in public space; these portraits chart a parallel time line on the body. They speak to the longevity of this work and to a continued commitment to challenging the realities of the violence it marks. I show myself here as the founder of the project: a queer man, visible, determined and aging.

# TIME AFTER TIME

It's taken me a while to settle on the best way to display the images of my plantings. Displaying the images framed with a conventional title, written in pencil or pen beneath the image, felt unsatisfactory. I wanted to give the title the same physical and conceptual space as the image of the pansy. This is why the abuse or dedication inhabits the same amount of visual space as the flower. I have also chosen to omit dates, as the planting might mark an event that happened before the pansy was placed, so a date can be misleading.

The omission of dates also evokes a connection to the events I mark: they can occur in an instant, though their impact can last for days, weeks, or even years. Capturing the image of a temporary micro-memorial hints at the nature of the planting itself; it happens, there is a moment of reflection, and then I depart. The planting is a ritual designed to interact with the memory of an incident motivated by hate.



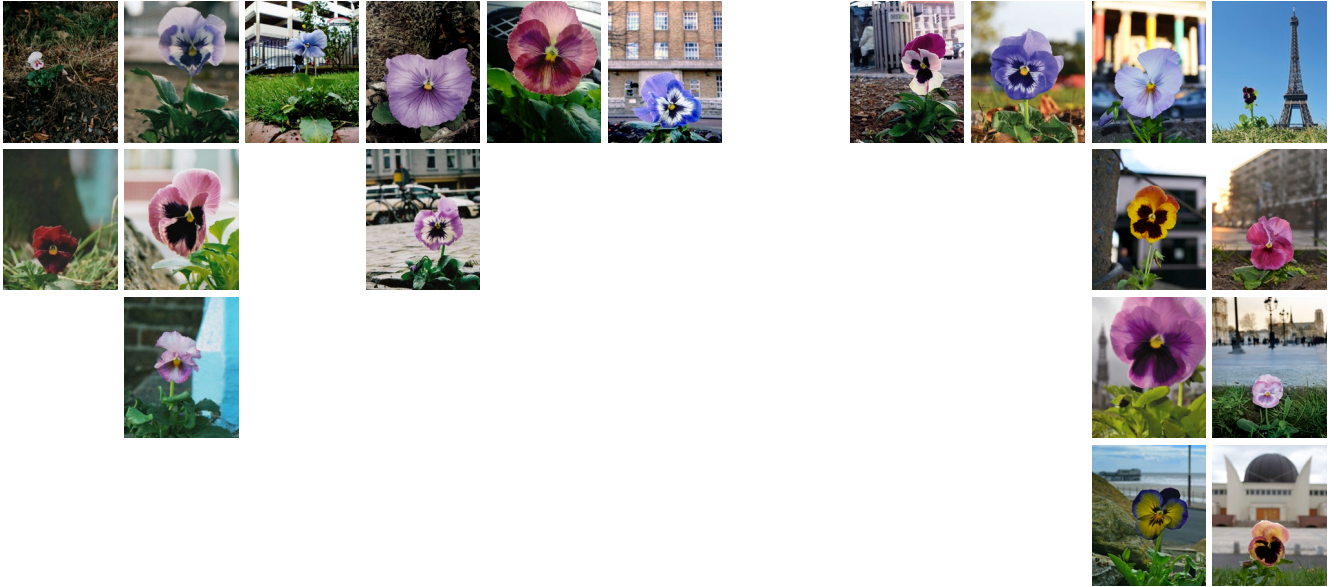
Documenting pansies in Brussels, 2014.  
Photo – Wen-Chi Su.

The absence of dates also places an emphasis on repetition. Each planting becomes one of many, reflecting the recurring nature of homophobia and transphobia. These incidents are not isolated moments but patterns that repeat across time and place. By returning to the same gesture over twenty years, the project acknowledges this persistence while offering a sustained counteraction not to reinforce harm, but to quietly resist it, transforming acts of hate into moments of care, remembrance, and endurance. I include the table overleaf to give an impression of the time span of the work.

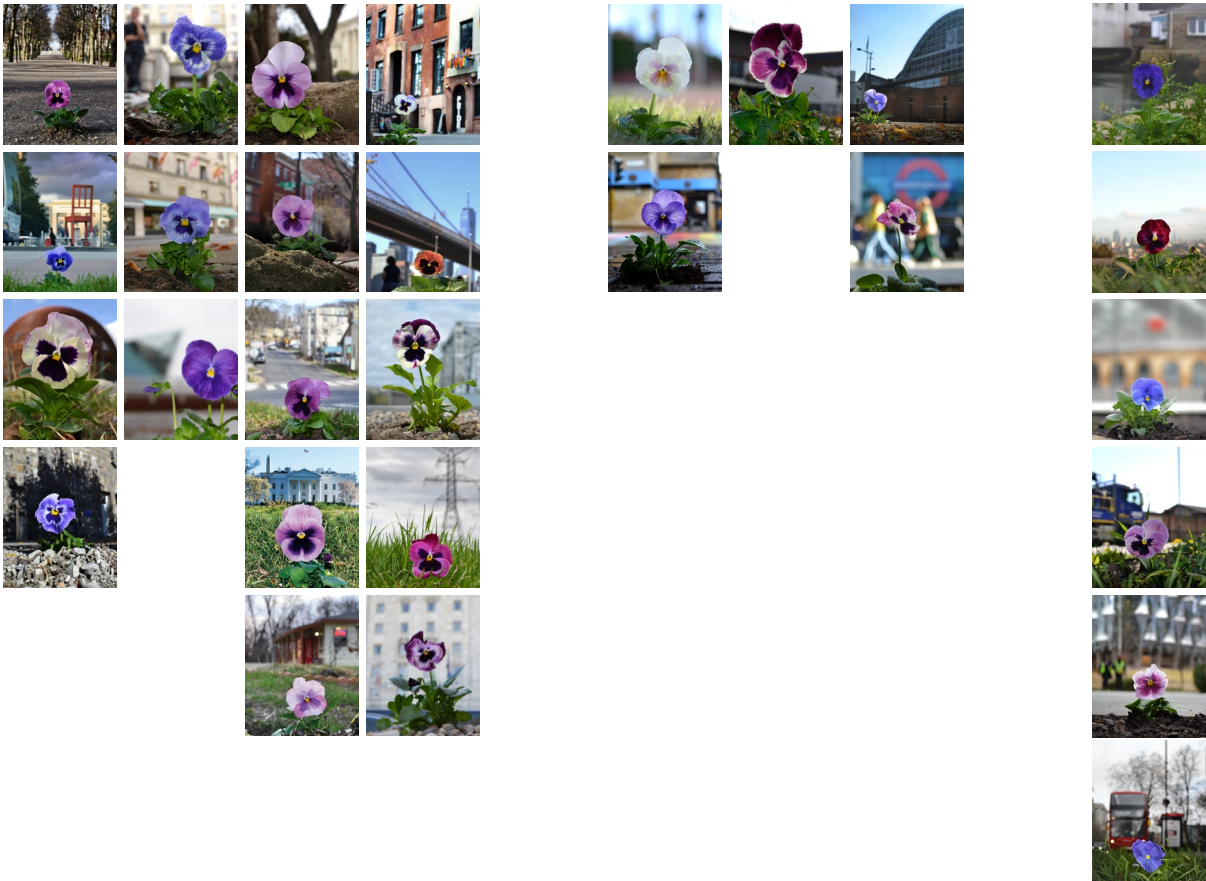


Rebel Garden, Musea Brugge, Belgium.  
Part of Triënnale Brugge 2024.

*2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015*



*2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025*



Acknowledgements: I'd like to thank every individual, organisation and festival that has supported The Pansy Project over the last twenty one years, including all the volunteers and participants who have bravely shared their stories and supported every planting.

Some individuals stand out as ambassadors of The Pansy Project including; Jan Bradley, Gary Everett, Ruth McCarthy, Jonathan Keane, Glenn Nuotio, Jean-Baptiste Erreca and Joseph Galliano-Doig.

Festivals and galleries represented here include: Queer Up North Arts Festival, Manchester Art Gallery, Conflux Festival, Homotopia Festival, Qu'Art Festival, Camden LGBT Forum, Shout Festival, Outburst Queer Arts Festival, London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, Royal Horticultural Society, CANAL+, Everybody's Perfect LGBT Film Festival, Manchester Pride, Truth is Concrete, Spencer Museum, BBC Contains Strong Language, Cornwall Pride, FACT Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery, Waterside and Pride in Trafford.



Above, watering a pansy in Liverpool in 2025. Part of my own little ritual is that I always take a drink of water and then give the pansy some. Photo - Sophie Marie Louise Keough



OPEN  
EYE  
GALLERY