Martin Green

Speaking notes for *The House of Kings and Queens* opening

27/07/17

Welcome!

Why are we here today? [Any instinctive thoughts about LGBT 50 programme origins]

27th July 1967 – a significant moment in the LGBT movement but not the end of the struggle.

 Over 70 countries continue to criminalise homosexuality, some with the death penalty.

Chechnya is in a process of a sinister ‘cleansing’ of its population

Russia continues to ban mention of homosexuality in its media;

and, not so far away, Northern Ireland’s Assembly keeps voting for same sex marriage only for it be vetoed by its First Minister!

We need to continue working in solidarity with LGBT communities at home and around the world continuing to struggle for equal rights.

We are marking this moment with the opening of this exhibition. A beautiful display of photographs captured by Lee Price is part of our work supported by the British Council in our sister city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, where homosexuality remains illegal.

Lee Price has created a poignant collection of photographs offering a glimpse into the life of a young transgender woman, Kween Harald, who provides a sanctuary for LGBT people in need.

It is a place where LGBT people exiled from their homes and society can live without oppression whilst surrounded by those who understand them and accept them. They call it *The House of Kings and Queens*.

Lee’s previous work has often focused on the subject of sexuality. As a gay man, social attitudes to sexuality have always been of great interest to him and he has explored this subject matter in numerous forms and in various parts of the world.

His work documents, in a visually striking and honest way, groups and subcultures that are hidden from view, from the gay cruisers of *Sex with Strangers* to the discriminated LGBT community of Uganda in *Against the Order of Nature*.

The photographs in *The House of Kings and Queens* convey both the cloud of secrecy surrounding the lives of its subjects and also the sense of liberation they feel when able to express themselves freely in the presence of Kween Harald.

Kween Harald has been at the heart of this project from the very beginning [Intro video of Kween Harald]

**Lost Property** is part of LGBT50, a week-long celebration of LGBT+ culture across the arts, which will take place from 22 - 29 July to mark the 50th anniversary of the start of the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

*While you’re at Gallery 4, can I encourage you to pick up a copy of Lost Property? This is a collection of short stories written by local people about their experiences in the LGBT community. The stories, some of which focus on Hull as a place of diversity and progression, provide a stark contrast to the subjects in Lee Price’s exhibition, who face hostility outside the sanctuary of The House.*

Optional: *Donations for the zine are gratefully received and will be given to Hull Shout Group, a confidential group for 14-15, towards supporting the group in providing a safe space for young LGBTQ+ people*

**Thank Yous** – Kween Harald, Lee Price. David Sinclair and the team at Humber Street Gallery. And thank you to Sewell Group and Spirit of 2012 for their support across this beautiful week of activity.

Rest of LGBT 50 programme

* Premiere of *God’s Own Country* tomorrow night at Vue at 7pm. Yorkshire’s *Brokeback Mountain*
* Saturday – Tea Party from 1pm, Concert from 6.30pm and tickets for our after party at Fuel at 10pm are on sale on our website.

Have a drink and a chat. Share your messages of solidarity with LGBT people around the world to mark this day in which we celebrate our freedoms gained. But leave your drink here while you head around to the exhibition.

Enjoy yourselves and love each other freely!