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**PRESS
RELEASE**
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For Immediate
Release

Manchester artist's 'EXAM' marks 10 years since the repeal of homophobic Section 28.

On May 23rd artists from **Ultimate Holding Company** premiere their new large-scale project 'EXAM' - with 100s of volunteers and months of research into queer political and cultural history.

The piece, blending visual art, education and immersive performance is the brainchild of 27 year old Manchester artist **Joseph Richardson**. It will premiere for one day only and commemorates 10 years since the repeal of laws banning the teaching of same sex relationships in schools.

The details of **Exam**, planned to take place in **Salford University's** huge Maxwell Hall, are being kept strictly under wraps before the audience is allowed in to experience the piece.

"Although we are not revealing what the public will experience on the day," comments Joe, "we are keen to highlight Exam's purpose - to focus attention on celebrating neglected LGBT stories, exploring our alternative and hidden closeted histories"

Commenting on the inspiration behind Exam, Mr Richardson said "Recent research into homophobic abuse in schools in Lancashire shows that 95.6% of teachers had overheard or observed homophobic abuse in their school on at least a termly basis (Lancashire NUT 2009 Prevalence of Homophobia Survey). It is clear to me that LGBT artists have a duty to make work which empowers and inspires us as individuals and a community to take action which challenges straight society's prejudice and control of information in schools."

The artist has brought together a unique 'Exam Board' of 20 representatives from across Lancashire and Manchester's diverse LGBT communities who are helping to steer and develop the piece. The Board includes members of Newall Green High School and **Out In The City**, Manchester's active support group for mature LGBT people.

Exam has been commissioned as part of this year's **Queer Up North Festival**, Manchester's international festival of queer performance and art, which celebrates its 18th Birthday this May.

Participation Organiser Nicki Dupuy comments "Engaging with local visual artists Ultimate Holding Company is a unique opportunity to expand the reach of our programme to new audiences. We are very proud and excited to have been able to collaborate with the company to develop this important work at such a significant time."

The artists have big long-term aspirations for Exam, using it to raise awareness of the Conservative Party's history of homophobic legislation in an election month, as well as working with educators to campaign for the work to be discussed in schools nationwide.

Ends

For further information please contact:

Kate Houlton on 0161 238 8523 or visit the project webpage at www.uhc.org.uk/exam

Exam by Joseph Richardson with Ultimate Holding Company.

Location: Maxwell Hall, University of Salford, Salford Crescent, Salford, M5 4WT

Opens to the public at **12.30pm, on 23rd May 2010.**

Participation is free but advance booking is essential for candidates (places are limited to 100). To book email exam@queerupnorth.com or log on to www.queerupnorth.com

Notes to editors:

1) JOSEPH RICHARDSON (27) - Lead Artist for EXAM

Joseph Richardson is an artist, co-founder and Director at Ultimate Holding Company. Joe has led the studio's interest in the psychology of institutions, community networks, social mapping and control.

Joe graduated in 2006 from MMU with a degree in Interactive Art, and was joint winner of the Art Gene Open Prize with Ultimate Holding Company in 2007 for his sculpture People's Tower for Manchester. He sees Exam as an opportunity to make new work exploring personal experiences of marginalisation, with his current employment in local schools (with pupils at risk of exclusion) as well as his own sexuality all used as potential influences on the project.

He has worked extensively with action research based art, recently with the CN4M network, mapping around 100 individuals involved in the network and interviewing many of them. The work was recently exhibited at Castlefield Gallery.

UHC website - www.uhc.org.uk

UHC Blog - www.uhcblog.blogspot.com

UHC Twitter - www.twitter.com/Ult_Holding_Co

2) ULTIMATE HOLDING COMPANY

Ultimate Holding Company have operated as an artist led studio delivering radical art projects in Manchester for 8 years. Most famously the artists imprisoned 9 volunteers in a faithful recreation of the US's Guantanamo Bay internment facility 'Camp XRay'. At a time when 9 British nationals were still being held without charge in the real prison, Ultimate Holding Company were reenacting the daily routine of guards and prisoners in a realistic replica on wasteland on the outskirts of Manchester city centre - guns and all!

Last year the artists turned their focus on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin - over a long weekend they tattooed 100 volunteers, each with the image of one of the most endangered species in the UK.

3) SECTION 28

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was a controversial amendment to the United Kingdom's Local Government Act. Enacted in 1988, the amendment stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship". It was repealed on 21 June 2000 in Scotland, and in 2003 in the rest of the UK.

4) PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos of the artist, Exam Board and promotional illustrations are available on request. Photography of the event only with prior agreement from the artist.

5) QUEER UP NORTH

Queer Up North is Manchester's international queer festival. The first of its type in Europe, Queer Up North commissions, produces and presents a diverse annual programme of live performance, art and ideas. The festival runs from 18 to 31 May 2010 across Manchester.

Since 1992, Queer Up North has played an important part in the North West's cultural scene, presenting and commissioning the very best in queer culture throughout the city of Manchester. In 2010, we're proud to still be here, with another tempting festival programme – see www.queerupnorth.com