

## SOKO San Paolo

Police; from one of the most dangerous cities in the world and from one of the safest; an intriguing proposition. Over several floors of a large office building, artists Lola Arias and Stephan Kaegi begin with 90 minutes of self directed exploration. In 20 rooms officers from both cities present themselves either in person or through film; the San Paolo police dog trainer puts his 'partner' through her paces, two Munich officers demonstrate self defence. Photographs temporarily tacked to the walls show murder weapons and officers on parade; family snaps and images from childhood in an attempt to show the people behind the jobs.

Baring in mind that this audience member could speak neither Argentinean nor German, another layer of complexity is added. Without an interpreter and with mounting anxiety we were led from a video, demonstrating techniques for chasing criminals in the favella's, to a room where the officer appeared to play act his way through several dangerous situations, until he finally shot the crude drawing of a man holding a gun. Finally a motivational film, edited to the popular anthem; 'we are the champions, my friends', was truly chilling. In the UK, 2005 a Brazilian tourist was brutally shot by police who mistook him for a terrorist; begging big questions about who are the victims, and who are the perpetrators.

Art provided a strange subtext; the recorded Munich police choir sang in one room, the San Paolo police band's double bass player (considered queer by his colleagues), played a few bars before shooting a target with 9.5 accuracy and stranger still the emergency call centre receptionist danced imperfect samba for one whole minute, the average length of a 911 call. Characterisation is delivered through simple statements or playacting; absent suspects reduced to stereotypes.

Performance involving ordinary working people can be immensely successful. One cannot deny the dramatic power of staging a shooting or describing in graphic detail the removal of a charred body from a crime scene. The ability to explore gives a sense of freedom and the small shows are intimate and informal. The crime scene photographer even provides tips; knifing someone from the front could seem less deliberate than from behind.

Finally the entire audience were seated round a football pitch for a friendly game, each officer a star. However, the whole event seemed a marketing exercise; insisting that the police fight 'criminals' as plain clothes individuals rather than part of a formidable government institution. This show delivers all the expected themes; violence, defence, fighting crime and bearing arms, but forgets to ask some fundamental questions about how and why.

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