



In this ongoing project, representatives from national police forces are invited to give presentations at art schools across the world, illustrating the opportunities presented by such a career and encouraging students to join up. For a country's police force to be effective, its constituent employees should reflect the demographics of its society. It is perhaps inevitable that members of arts communities are under-represented in the nations' policing, but this project is an attempt to address the situation nevertheless and to begin to remedy it.

A letter is sent out to a contact within an art school describing the procedure of Cop Talk and soliciting their help. The description contains a second letter, to be adapted accordingly, addressed from the contact at the art school to the local police force, inviting a representative to offer vocational advice to the school's students in the form of a recruitment presentation:

Dear [name of recipient at local/regional police office — after research to discover which department and who specifically deals with recruitment/human resources]

We would like to invite a representative from [name of police office] to give a talk about career opportunities within the force to students attending courses at [name of school], outlining the broad range of specialisms that such a career can offer.

The art department at [name of school] has a strong reputation in its field and fosters an environment of high motivation and ambition amongst its [# of] students. Part of our remit at the school is to develop students' knowledge and self-awareness of graduate employment opportunities. This is especially important in art and design students, since graduates from non-vocational courses learn transferable skills and tend to search for work in a broad range of careers outside their primary focus of study.

A guest at the Academy, Chris Evans, has been successfully working with police representatives since 2005 in various locations including Ljubljana, Taipei, and Brussels, organizing presentations offering advice and recruitment possibilities to art and design students. On his recommendation, we are contacting you and very much hope that a representative from your division would be able to visit us to give a short presentation on [proposed date] at a time convenient to you.

[Appropriate salutations/name/title]

For each iteration of Cop Talk, 30 posters are silkscreened, of which 20 are displayed at the art school announcing "A RECRUITMENT TALK BY THE NYPD TO ART STUDENTS AT THE PRATT INSTITUTE" (or appropriate local phrasing). The poster depicts an airbrush painting of a remote landscape,

a form resembling what might be a rock or a sculpture and, parked before it, a Lamborghini Countach painted in the livery of the Dutch police force.

At the time of writing, a Cop Talk is being arranged for art students in Istanbul. 15 such events have previously taken place at art schools in Amsterdam, Manchester, Stockholm, Berlin, New York City, Brussels, Antwerp, Breda, Maastricht, Ljubljana, Taipei, Grangemorgan, Dublin, Dùn Laughaire, and Nuremberg. The present Bulletin comprises a transcript of the fifth one, which took place on the afternoon of 30th April 2008, at Pratt Institute, New York City, under the auspices of Creative Time.

(Chris Evans)

Cover: Detail from the generic Cop Talk poster.

CHRIS EVANS: Today's presentation in the Pratt Institute's Art and Design School is part of a campaign on behalf of police forces worldwide, in which representatives introduce a career in the force to students generally—and here of course specifically to art and design students. If I could just quickly ask you to turn off your cell phones. There will be a Q&A after the presentation. If you have a question, please step up to the microphones. That just leaves me to thank Officers Breleur and Viennas for coming here today. Here they are. Thank you.

. . .

OFFICER BRELEUR: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. I'm Police Officer Breleur of the NYPD Recruitment Unit, along with Police Officer Viennas, also of the same unit. We're here this afternoon to give a brief synopsis of what the Police Department entails as for potential candidates coming on to the police force.

I'll start with what the requirements are to be part of the New York City Police Department. The first requirement is that you fall between the ages of 17 through 34. We allow you to take the test at 17-and-a-half, but we can't officially hire you until you're 21, due to the fact that you need 60 college credits. To sit for the written exam, you must be a resident of New York City or the five surrounding counties, which are Nassau, Suffolk, Putnam, Orange, and Westchester. Okay. In addition to those other requirements, you have to be a U.S. citizen and you must not have been convicted of any felonies. You must also have a New York State driver's license with no restrictions. The test deals with ten ability areas, all of which would have been acquired in junior high and elementary school. It's a very easy exam. For those of you in the audience who are interested in applying for the exam, we have application forms with us. We also have a website. If anyone's interested, they should log on to [www.nypdrecruit.com](http://www.nypdrecruit.com). There's a video that outlines the A through Z's of the entire application process.

Are there any questions thus far? None? Okay. Now, the starting salary presently is \$25,000 for the six months spent in the Academy. Upon graduation after your sixth month, and for the first five-and-a-half years of service, you will move up to the top base pay of \$59,000.

Every year and a half you'll get increment raises upon your anniversary date.

The Police Department has over two hundred specialized units. Some of these units are Aviation Unit, Bomb Unit, Crime Scene, and Detective Bureau. I have a flyer — if anyone's interested — that lists the 200 positions. There are basically two assets of police work that the general public comes in contact with: your patrol officer on foot, or your patrol officer in a sector car. There are also other units. Case in point, I am a police officer and I work for the Recruitment Unit. My function is not to go out there and write summonses or make arrests, even though that's a part of my uniform duty. My primary function is to go out and recruit people and give them the information that is needed to become a New York City police officer.

Okay, any questions? I've never had so many eyes staring at me.

OFFICER VIENNAS: Now, just going back to the benefits, we neglected to tell you that you do start off with 20 paid vacation days. After five-and-a-half years, it increases to 27. It's a great experience. You're gonna have a show right in front of you every day, basically. It's something different every day. You get to meet different people, help people, and as far as the pension plan, you get half of what you made over the course of 20 years of service. You may stay longer than that if you wish, but that's one of the perks of joining the police department: retirement after 20 years of service. You could start at 21 and be done by 41.

BRELEUR: Case in point, Officer Viennas is a 12-year veteran, correct?

VIENNAS: Right, right.

BRELEUR: I'm a 16-year veteran, so four years from now I'm out the door. But maybe I'll give you, you know, a brief history of what I did over the 16 years. I started out as a patrol officer in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn, which is considered Brooklyn North. I worked at the 83rd Precinct. I worked patrol for basically six years, which consisted of community affair policing as well as sector car patrol.

Then I was asked to come over here to the Recruitment Section because I got along so well with the general public, and I was a good speaker. Basically, I had a lot of charm and personality qualities. I came over to the Recruitment Section, and I plan to retire from this unit, because it's a very lucrative position for me. It allows me the flexibility of scheduling myself, because I am a wife and a parent, and at times I need a flexible schedule. The Recruitment Section allows me that, and there are many units that will allow you and afford you that opportunity. But my primary function is to serve and protect, of course.

VIENNAS: Going back to the benefits, another great benefit is that we have unlimited sick leave. So, if we get sick for a long period of time, we will be getting our regular paycheck. Another thing we have are different plans that you can join to actually save money, like deferred compensation. There's an annuity fund, so you can actually prepare yourself for the future once you retire. You don't want to just depend on your pension or social security, especially with today's economics. I know the pay is not very ...

BRELEUR: It's not as appealing as a ...

VIENNAS: It's not appealing.

BRELEUR: Yeah.

VIENNAS: It's not as appealing, but it's in arbitration right now. We are four years behind, and we should be getting something decent, we hope. But the opportunity is there to make money if you want to make money, and like she said before about the different units, if you went to school to become a teacher, or if you were in the military and you flew planes, you could use that in this police department. We have the Aviation Unit, and we have the Police Academy, where you can teach new recruits. There are so many different things that you can do in this department after you actually do two to three years of patrol. You have to do the time on the street. A lot of people ask me, "Can we graduate and go right into these units?" No, you can't. Your primary function is as a police officer, and it always will be. If I'm asked to go out there tomorrow and handle a crowd or anything like that, I have to do it; recruitment is then set aside

for that day. But, like I said, there are a lot of opportunities. We're one of the largest police departments in the country, and we hire twice a year. No other police department does that, so your chances of coming into this department are greater than anywhere else.

I know a lot of you are not even studying criminal justice or anything like that, but it is an option for you to have because I know a lot of kids today graduate and cannot find jobs. This is just another option. If you like helping people, then this is the job to be in. And I think that's it. Any questions? Comments?

QUESTION: I'd love to hear from both of you about your reasons for joining the police force. What drew you to it?

VIENNAS: I've wanted to do this since I was a little girl. I liked helping kids. Before I came into the recruitment unit, I did about eight-and-a-half years on patrol, and one of the units that I was in while I was on patrol was the School Unit. I used to go to the schools and talk to kids about drugs and staying in school. That was the reason why I always wanted to join. If I've helped five kids in this world, then that's a benefit for me.

BRELEUR: Well, Officer Viennas is a lot nobler than I am. I'm going to be honest here. I took the job because that 20-year retirement appealed to me. I couldn't see myself working forever. I didn't want to be 55 or 65 and working. I just wanted it to be over with, and that's what appealed to me. I've gained a lot of benefits since I took the position as a New York City Police Officer. I've met wonderful people, and I believe I've made enormous differences out there with individuals. The Police Department is composed of so many comedians—believe it or not, you must have a sense of humor to deal with some of the things that we deal with on a normal, day-to-day basis. For the most part, it's been a fulfilling 16 years, and if you were to ask me "Would you do it again?," I would.

QUESTION: I'm interested to know what day-to-day experiences are like for you guys, and what we could expect if we were to join the force?

BRELEUR: I'll go back to a day-to-day experience of what it was like when I did my basic patrol function. You had your good days and bad.



NYPD officers Viennas and Breleur

There are things that happen out there that at the end of the day are very difficult to put aside; things that you go through, things that you see. My weakness is children. When I come across abused and neglected children, it kind of touches home because my maternal instincts kick in. But, overall, for the good and the bad that we've seen, I still believe that there is more good out there than there is bad, and that's what keeps me going — knowing that there is still hope out there for many people. Times are getting harder right now. We're in a recession, and there are a lot of unhappy people out there, and they tend to do things that they normally wouldn't do to survive. But we're trained, and we're doing our best to just keep things safe for everyone.

VIENNAS: In regards to what a new recruit should expect: they would go through six months of academy, or police training. One of the subjects is law, the other is social science, where we learn about the different cultures of people living in New York City. Police science is basically paperwork that you have to know out there, and then you have two hours of physical education. You run, you do calisthenics; you actually get paid to work out, which is great. I didn't think it was so great at the time, but if I had to do

it all over again, I would. Once you graduate, you will be placed either in a precinct, transit district, or housing district, and for another six months, you will be placed with a training officer or training sergeant. What you will be doing is going to different calls and basically observing, not really taking action. If you feel comfortable, you can, but for the next six months, you will be training with someone who has experience. After that, you are either alone or partnered up with someone. I was alone. I was in the subways in Manhattan, and worked at night. I basically had to patrol the trains by myself, so I had to be a quick learner. They don't do that anymore; now they send you out with someone else. Once you have completed three years of patrol, you are eligible to take a promotional exam, and the first rank would be sergeant, followed by lieutenant, captain, and above; there is room to grow if you want to make money that way. If you want to be a supervisor, or if you have good managerial skills, then that's the way to go. The exams are not easy; they are very hard. A lot of people like to do it that way. Me, personally, I'm very happy as a police officer, and I think I'm going to stay that way.

QUESTION: What is your most defining moment or memory as a police officer?

VIENNAS: I think I've been very fortunate. I haven't had too many bad things happen. I really enjoyed helping kids, helping them out by helping them stay in school. That was it. If I'm looking back, I'd say 9/11, but I don't think we really want to get into that one. That would be the most defining moment for me, just helping kids, just working with kids.

BRELEUR: Are you looking for specifics?

QUESTION: I guess I'm interested in a personal memory?

BRELEUR: One of the saddest memories for me was about 12 years ago; it was Baby Angel. My partner and I came across a baby in the dumpster. She was stillborn, and we named her Baby Angel, and we gave her a memorial service. That was one of the most traumatic moments of my career.

VIENNAS: You're not going to get too many good memories,

unfortunately. You could, by saving someone's life. We just haven't had those kinds of experiences, Officer Breleur and myself. Unfortunately, we have had sadder moments.

QUESTION: It seems like both of your reasons for joining the force was to help people? Have you been able to fulfill that?

VIENNAS: Yes, I have. I recruit, which I think is a way of helping people now too—making them see what the police department is about. Some people just look at us in a negative way, and everybody's not the same.

QUESTION: I just wanted to say thanks, firstly, for speaking to the students here at Pratt. I wondered if you could speak a little to the continued allegations of racism and sexism that is both implicit in the police force and also in the police force's handling of the public.

VIENNAS: Allegations? I haven't heard any allegations, so I really couldn't comment on that.

QUESTION: What about personal things you've experienced?

VIENNAS: I have to be honest with you, I really haven't had any problems. Anything I have applied for, I have been able to attain. I have been lucky and haven't had any problems dealing with that.

QUESTION: What do you think of the differences between the idea of a police force and a police service, because historically it has been referred to in different ways. Would you say you operate in the police force or service?

VIENNAS: Well we are here to protect and serve, but I guess saying "force" is ...

BRELEUR: I think when you refer to the "force," you refer to everyone within the police department, and when you speak about "service," it's the individual act or the group act. That's how I would distinguish it. Any other questions?

QUESTION: I have a question regarding your uniforms and what they mean to you. When you put them on in the morning how does it feel? Especially in a town where there is some hostility, as you mentioned, towards the police force?

VIENNAS: I'm proud to put on my uniform because I know who I am and what I stand for. I'm definitely proud.

BRELEUR: I wear this uniform with great pride, because I know who I am as an individual, and it doesn't change much of my individuality. When I put it on, it enhances me, because now I'm doing a particular function. Just like when I walk through my house door, and I take it off, I'm a mother; it doesn't change that at all. I'm still this person, whether I'm in uniform or not; I'm still out there to do the best job I could possibly do.

QUESTION: I was reading an article in the *New York Times* about imprisonment in America, and how we have five percent of the world's population, and 25 percent of the world's population in prison. You guys are on the streets and really know what people are struggling with day-to-day in a hands-on way that maybe politicians don't. What I'm wondering is, if you were elected to office, what laws would you change so that there were less people in prison, or maybe you'd put more in prison?

BRELEUR: Well, I'm not an expert in this area, but if you're asking for a personal opinion, I find that the politicians have cut so many programs that were once in place for a younger generation, and because of this, what do these kids have left? They have nothing left. When I was growing up in New York City, we had many after-school and summer programs, and these were helpful in keeping me off the streets. They gave me a certain pride and dignity. When you start to cut programs and education, what message are you sending to the children? I think as a politician I would bring these back into all communities, to assist all these kids, because they need it. We're not babysitters, but these programs help in a lot of the stages in life that these young adults go through.

QUESTION: Could you elaborate on any of these programs that are still available to inmates or children in school? Education or art programs that you feel are working?

BRELEUR: I'm not an expert on the different programs that are still active, as I stated, but I'm aware of the cuts that do exist. I give credit to those that still exist, because they are needed, but when you start cutting — and I'm sure you'll agree with me — what do you have left? These kids depend on these programs, considering the background they come from. They have created a lot of positive people. I know many people within this police department that — if some of these programs didn't exist — wouldn't be police officers today, or they wouldn't be professionals in this society. Whether it's a library or a program that they have within the arts department, it helps. If it helps one or two individuals, it's better than helping none at all.

QUESTION: Do you personally know any creative types that are in the force with you: visual artists, writers, or designers? If so, do you think they bring a different approach to their work?

BRELEUR: With over two hundred positions within the police department, we rarely come into contact with a lot of these different units, so I can't give you much information on that particular subject.

QUESTION: You mentioned that you have families, and I'd imagine that the police force is a 24-hour job — that you bring it home with you. And I wondered how you find that life/work balance, and how when you come home and change hats and become a mom, how do you balance that?

BRELEUR: At first it was hard. When you come into the police force, you have a lot of expectations of what they want you to do, of what is allowed. It took me quite a while to realize that what happens at work stays at work, and what happens at home stays at home. Even though I'm a police officer, my primary function is that of a mother. If you don't learn how to separate the two, it can be very traumatic not only for yourself but for your family. The police department has a very high divorce rate. We don't have the counseling, unfortunately, to teach individuals how to separate work- and home-life; it's something you learn from one another within the department. For the most part, you grasp it pretty fast if you want to keep your home intact. Any other questions?

QUESTION: I have to ask, is the popularity of shows like *The Wire* and *Law & Order*, making a difference for recruitment?

BRELEUR: Yes, but you know how the media hypes everything ...

VIENNAS: I think *Law & Order* is pretty close, though. That's my favorite show.

BRELEUR: For the most part, it's a huge difference. There are similarities, of course.

VIENNAS: It's not as eccentric as it seems to be a detective. It's long hours, and you don't see your family, but it's very fulfilling. It's a great job to be able to close a murder case, to be able to catch that person. But it requires a lot of work, it doesn't happen in 60 minutes like in the shows.

QUESTION: I wondered if you questioned the sincerity of the invitation to speak to an audience of art and design students that generally isn't in agreement with the ways you defend justice?

BRELEUR: For the most part, we go out and speak to the general public everyday. We don't expect everyone to love police officers; there are those individuals who couldn't care less for our profession. But you learn to separate yourself from those negative comments, or audiences. That's what we do for a living, and what we do, we do with great pride. What more can I say?

VIENNAS: People don't call us when something good happens. It's always when something bad happens. We're not the fire department. They're glad to see the fire department, but not a police officer.

QUESTION: I'm not trying to create a polemic, but it's so rare that our communities interact with each other, the so-called "creative community" and the police force. I'm wondering if you're allowed to make some kind of comment or statement on the murder of Amadou Diallo by four New York City Department plain-clothed officers?

VIENNAS: We can't, we can't. The deputy commissioner's office will comment on that but me, personally, in uniform, I can't.

BRELEUR: Unfortunately, we cannot. It's basically a gag order.

VIENNAS: You know what it is? We all have our feelings about different situations, but when we put these uniforms on, that's it. We have to be quiet.

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