

## ARTTALK

### The Force Was with Them

"Don't quit your day job" has always been popular advice for budding artists. This time, however, the suggestion is coming from someone inside their ranks, and rather than advocating bartending, he wants them to join the police force.

British conceptual artist **Chris Evans** has been organizing "Cop Talks" in Europe for several years, inviting police officers to art schools to host recruitment sessions. On a spring afternoon he brought his series to Brooklyn, where he set the stage for a tough battle: New York's Finest vs. skeptical students from the Pratt Institute. Sponsored by the nonprofit group Creative Time, the talk will be documented in a book, due out this fall.

NYPD officers **Jacqueline Breleur** and **Penny Viennas** were commanding figures onstage, dressed in full uniform, handcuffs clinking at their sides. They kept inspirational talk to a minimum, focusing instead on the pragmatic benefits of the job: many artists worry about

health care, but police officers get unlimited sick days and can retire after 20 years. In Manchester, Evans recounted, one cop broke it down like this: "Cons: might have to pick up body parts. Pros: pension."

The series may appear to be performance art. But Evans told *ARTnews* that while he does not plan to join the force himself, he wants to help both students and officers. Given that few art students become working artists, they should have the "opportunity to learn about other careers," he said, adding that police forces would be

better if they "reflected all aspects of society."

The program has been successful, Evans said: after a session in the Netherlands, three students signed up for the force immediately. At Pratt, however, the crowd remained dubious. "I definitely won't be becoming a cop," sculpture student **Sarah Boatright** said. But, she reflected, "retiring after 20 years—that would be a dream."  
—*Sara Rafsky*



NYPD officers at art school.