

## YOSHUA OKON

Born 1970 Mexico; lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico, and Los Angeles, California



*Orillese a la Orilla (Poli IV)*, 1999

DVD, single-channel video projection, 3 min.; Courtesy of The Project, New York and Los Angeles, and Galeria Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City

Okon serves multiple functions in the making of his videos: that of director, producer, and sometime actor. His works are a blend of documentary film, performance, and improvisation that are comic and sarcastic, and revel in paradox and parody. *Orillese a la Orilla*, 1999-2000, comprises a series of videos in which Okon documents policemen in Mexico City performing for money in different situations under the direction of the artist. The title comes from an expression commonly used by the police to pull drivers over to the side of road. In *Poli IV*, a policeman demonstrates his ability with the baton, while another dances for the camera in *Poli V*. In another video from this series, Okon documents the paying of a bribe to have himself released following an arrest.

The uncanny performances captured in Okon's videos speak to the identities, desires, fantasies, and instincts of these policemen, and suggest how they adapt to the particular constraints of their environment. Police officers in uniform are meant to represent justice and power, but when more money is necessary to get by, or perhaps just offers the means for a better life, their sense of social duty can be negated with relative ease, or even ironically reversed. All the same, these people clearly delight in performing in front of a camera, reflecting the common fantasy that stardom is within the grasp of ordinary people.

**SELECTED EXHIBITIONS.** SOLO: 2004 The Project, Los Angeles; GROUP: 2003 *Poetic Justice*, 8th International Istanbul Biennial; 2002 *Strangers: First ICP Triennial of Photography*, International Center of Photography, New York; 2002 *Mexico City: An Exhibition about the Exchange Rates of Bodies and Values*, P.S.1 MoMA, New York