

# Gulbenkian

ART31KENT Reviews

## Operation Black Antler, at a secret Chatham location - Fri 24 June

ART31KENT made their way to a secret Chatham location, to go undercover in Hydrocracker and Blast Theory's immersive Operation Black Antler. The piece was co-commissioned by Ideas Test and Brighton Festival.

Check out what ART31KENT reviewer Lucy made of the event:

As the working day ends and most people head home for tea, a small group assemble on Chatham high street eagerly awaiting instructions. After five minutes of meeting everyone, our phones buzz with instructions on where to go...

Operation: Black Antler is an immersive live performance by Hydrocracker and Blast Theory which has been co-commissioned by Brighton Festival and Ideas Test. Touching on the recent growing concerns of right wing groups and police surveillance, Black Antler places its participants as undercover police with the aim of finding out as much as possible about a new right wing group that is rapidly gaining notoriety.

We are then split into groups and each briefed about an individual who is suspected of being a part of this group and what we must find out about them. After being given a new identity, we head out to our location to find out more about our target. Upon arriving, we are greeted by a swarm of both brilliant actors and talented community cast members who really make this production authentic and believable by making you feel immersed from the get go.

Our group had to navigate round the venue, talking to many characters (and our 'target') to find out more about this new extremist group. Towards the end, we were notified to meet another undercover policeman for a debriefing in order to discuss whether we thought that the people we had met were a threat to public safety and warranted to be placed under heavier surveillance by having an agent go undercover for a longer period of time in order to get closer to the group.

I think this performance did a great job of raising a lot of reflection and discussion about both the rising amount of right wing activity in the UK, police surveillance and even the British class system. However I felt like it seemed quite linear for an interactive performance, as I was hoping that there would be a bit more focus on the ethics of police surveillance or how you approached certain things would result in a difference outcome to the whole experience. I understand that the cast are limited by time restraints but I think a better debriefing or a bigger post show discussion would help round things off quite nicely.

Overall, Operation Black Antler is a brilliant bit of immersive theatre. It is definitely worth checking out if you fancy a bit of role playing and a topical discussion afterwards.



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