

# “Maradona, the Divine?” – Photo installation in the Church of St. Henry

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“Maradona, the Divine?” is the title of an exhibition and installation that will open on Friday, September 23, in the Church of St. Heinrich in southern Hanover. It includes 134 black-and-white photographs by Italian photographer Sergio Siano, showing Argentinian footballer Diego Maradona during his time at Italian club SSC Napoli. The images document his footballing skills and the adoration Maradona has just received in Naples. The photos are hung on six meter high ropes. They are deliberately arranged in contrast and in a mirror to the exhibition site, a sacred space. Organizers are the Football Museum Springe, the Per Mertesacker Foundation and the Catholic Church in the Hanover region.

“It’s unique that we managed to bring the exhibition from Naples to Hanover,” says Dirk Schröder, 1st Chairman of the Football Museum in Springe: “We’re very proud of having realized this.” The impressive photos show how Maradona has helped an entire region to gain self-confidence and recognition: “That’s why we will also take a look at the fans in the exhibition.” The idea that the pictures are hanging “by a thread” from the ceiling is also a metaphor for the ups and downs of a professional career: “The fact that such hero worship per se cannot end well is already evident in the pictures.”

“Football is a medium for social integration,” explains Marcus Olm, Project Manager Sport Per Mertesacker Foundation and Board of Trustees: “The task of our foundation is to look after socially disadvantaged children and young people in the Hanover region.” A player like Diego Maradona has showed the power that football can develop and how it can help people connect with each other. “At the same time, Maradona is also a cautionary tale of how deep the fall can be when social ties are lost,” emphasizes Olm. That is why the Per Mertesacker Foundation is involved in this exhibition.

“Football and religion have always had a special connection,” says Thomas Harling, cultural officer of the Catholic Church in the Hanover region. The fans are like a religious community celebrating their Mass on the day of the game. These transitions are particularly clear with Maradona: “In Naples he was seen as the divine to whom songs were sung and altars consecrated.” Then the crash: “The radiant hero becomes a fallen angel, a broken personality, with violence, drugs, Mafia.” This ambivalence is explored in this exhibition and in the accompanying programme.

“Many visitors will certainly be surprised to find a sports exhibition in a church,” says Pastor Wolfgang Semmet and landlord of the Church of St. Heinrich. But it is precisely at

this location that such an exhibition can stimulate reflection on one's own longings: "We look for meaning, for happiness, for a successful life – or, to put it another way, for the 'divine' in our lives!" Faith can provide answers to the question of this longing, also in the mirror of the worship of a soccer player.

The worship of God, the deep fall, the ambiguity of personality: these aspects are addressed in the accompanying program of the exhibition. Both the photographer Sergio Siano and the curator of the original exhibition in Naples, Yvonne de Rosa, are expected to attend the opening of the exhibition on Friday, September 23. On Wednesday, October 12, a podium discussion will address the question of "Maradona, the divine" (7 p.m.). Jan Rosenthal (ex-professional from Hannover 96), Prof. Dr. Sandra Günter (sports sociologist at the University of Hanover) and Thorsten Leißer (pastor and football expert). The moderator is Dirk Tietenberg (Neue Presse). What "God and the Divine" is all about is the subject of a service on Sunday, November 13 (11 a.m.).

The exhibition can be seen until November 25 from Monday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the Church of St. Heinrich (Sallstraße 74, 30171 Hanover). Guided tours, also for blind and visually impaired people, are possible on request. Educational materials are available for the exhibition. In addition, the Puma archive in Herzogenaurach provided a number of extras, including a football and a training jacket with Maradona's autograph.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Hanns-Lilje-Foundation, the Hanover Region, the Lower Saxony Lottery Sports Foundation, the Leibniz University of Hanover, the St. Heinrich Foundation and the Diocese of Hildesheim.

More information at [www.maradona-ausstellung.de](http://www.maradona-ausstellung.de)

Image Sources:

- Maradona, the divine?: Catholic Church in the Hanover region