



Robyn Backen's *Connecting You*.

Photo: Ian Hobbs

# Connect with installations

**S**ome people are put off by exhibitions that involve audience participation. Robyn Backen's *Connecting you*, gives you the option of bystander or getting involved by positioning yourself in front of the projection. Either way, there is no escape from it pulling you in – and that is only part of its appeal.

Standing in front of this interconnected, two-part installation, the onlooker's figure casts a shadow in front of the projector. Our role moves from bystander to actor within the digital landscape cast onto the wall in front. We can enter the conversation.

It is this large video projection which initially arrests your attention. The words, "Hello it's me. I am here, where are you . . . If you are not here already I hope you arrive soon . . ." move with eager anticipation across the wall until they reach the end and turn back in on themselves so that the white lettering becomes superimposed with black reversals of themselves. Becoming progressively distended and narrower, the effect produces a pressing, disjointed expanse of confused gibberish.

Equipped with speakers which, fittingly, sit on plinths of telephone books, the visuals are supported by audio tracks which intersperse clear messages with indecipherable ones. Clarity and confusion are juxtaposed. Squelches like "I can hear you now . . . coming through clear" are reminders of our dependence upon clear transmission and the associated

## **Connecting you – Robyn Backen**

CCAS, Gorman House, Ainslie Avenue  
Braddon Gallery hours: 11am to 5pm,  
Tuesday to Friday; 10am to 4pm  
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Reviewer: **Jacqui Cheney**

inherent problems of interaction, including translation.

Intermittently, phones ring loudly and sonorously, grabbing our attention away from the screen to the other side of the installation. Here, placed in front of five square mirror panels, six old black Bakelite telephones are arranged in a semi-circle. Reflected in the mirror, and thereby forming a circle or earthly orb, their cords meet at the core, alluding to one source, one beginning. From the simple ideas about connectedness and communication there is much to draw upon in this work.

If you want your children to glean something from the wide, wired world of communications, then Backen's work doubles as a quasi-history/science lesson.

Aptly described as "an interdisciplinary artist whose work makes connections between art, science and philosophy", with this exhibition, Backen continues to define the significance of communication technology in today's world. Standing in the dimly-lit gallery space of this fascinating and engaging installation, and considering our role in her art, we can contemplate the function of communication in our own lives.