



# WE MAK\$ \$\$NEY NOT ART

Regine / April 29, 2007 / [art in Berlin](#), [installation](#), [sound](#), [telephony](#)

## O TELEPHONE

Just back from a trip to Kreuzberg where i discovered an exhibition space called [Ballhaus Naunynstrasse](#). They are showing until tomorrow (April 30, from 8 p.m to 9 pm.) three sound installations which, coupled with some really nice falafels like they do only in that neighbourhood, made my Sunday afternoon.

As you enter the building you're greeted by *17 Hippies – Das Hip-O-Phon*, a sound sculpture by Christopher Blenkinsop and Klaus Wagner. The wooden staircase that leads to the gallery is occupied by organ pipes up to 20 meters in length which create sound with material from the German band [17 Hippies](#).

Up the stairs, turn left and enter the room of [O Telephone](#), an 8 channel sound installation developed by Berlin-based Canadian artist [Don Ritter](#).



Six modified 1960s telephones are installed in circle on black pedestals within a darkened room. They randomly ring, each with its own distinctive sound. If you pick up a phone that is ringing, a powerful yoga-like “om” is heard through the handset and through the speaker located where the dial of the phone used to be.

If other people answer other ringing phones, the resulting “om” sounds will pan through all the answered phones. Like the ringing, each phone has its own “om” voice, some male, other female. The telephones will eventually begin a composition comprised of the ringing and “om” sounds if they are not answered by viewers. The best way to enjoy the piece is to stand in the middle of the circle of phones, then it feels like the sounds are turning around you. There are 35 different voices. The artist actually used the voice of the people in his yoga class when he lived in New York.



I liked the installation for two reasons: first of all because the old phones, though modified, keep on being beautiful and even get a mysterious touch in the process. The experience was quite engaging as well. I was alone in the room going from one phone to the other, not sure i was understanding what was happening at first (that’s a bad habit i have: i try to play then i read the accompanying notice) but totally enjoying it.