

BY DAVE MADDEN



▲ | Mischa Kuball's "the world inside me/me inside the world."

## SPINNING DISCO MAGIC

*Wood Street's latest rests awkwardly between confrontation and escapism.*

### LIGHT TRAPS

BY MISCHA KUBALL  
WOOD STREET GALLERIES, DOWNTOWN  
THROUGH DEC. 25; 471-5605

A LOT OF INSTALLATION art is — for obvious reasons — predicated on notions of the room. The more appreciated and engaging installations often transform whatever space they occupy into a nice, inviting room we'd all imagine having in our dream house, right next to the room with the trampoline on all four walls (ceiling and floor, too).

But these installations don't work when there's a heavy message attached to the ambiance. Because you can't have both: Either you thrill your audience with the idea of being comfortable in an impossible space, or you make them question what they're doing in it.

Either Mischa Kuball doesn't believe this schism between the two ideas is a necessary one, or he just decided to go ahead and try to incorporate them together anyway. This is *Light Traps'* fundamental problem.

Kuball works chiefly with light. The second floor of Wood Street is devoted to his "Speed, Space, Speech," a room with three disco balls hung close to the floor, reflecting projections of each of those words in the title. The result is a bunch of S's, P's and E's — among other letters — coating the walls of the room in a seemingly random manner.

The room is stunning to walk into, and it's fun to try to figure out just what words are being projected onto the walls and bounced off the disco balls. Then, you really have nothing left to do but move on upstairs.

The third floor, though, is a lot less fun than the second. "the world inside me/me inside the world" is as ambiguous as its title. Three spinning projectors show slides of windows and eyes — the connection here being not at all ambiguous — with one projector surrounded by 20 white hospital garments. Right next to this installation lies "Hitler's Cabinet," in which four projected images come out of a cross on the floor, forming a makeshift swastika.

Maybe it's because the works themselves take up so much space — something the relatively small Wood Street Galleries don't really have in spades when it comes to installation — that *Light Traps* is as unfulfilling as it is: Four pieces of art simply don't feel like a lot. But for some reason, Kuball doesn't seem to be in complete control of what he wants from his audience and from his medium. How are we supposed to work with three spinning projectors, and what exactly are they supposed to be showing us? Even after all the light is trapped, Kuball's work doesn't rise much out of the realm of novelty. **IP**