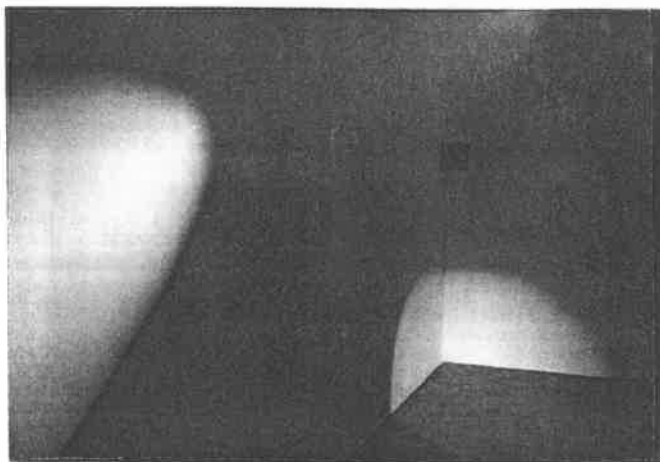


303 GALLERY

Time Out New York

ART

Review



Kristin Oppenheim, *Hey Joe*, 1996 (installation detail).

Kristin Oppenheim
303 Gallery, through Jun 22
(see Soho).

While Kristin Oppenheim's show may seem at first to be just another dry, empty-white-room exercise—with roots in Yves Klein's *Le Vide (The Void)* and work by Michael Asher—it's really more like an ethereal, hypnotic dream... or nightmare. Except for four smallish speakers, one in each corner, the main gallery is totally devoid of objects. Two circular spotlights, however, constantly move in an elaborate stop-and-start, approach-and-avoid dance across the gallery's gray, concrete floor. Over the speakers, you hear the high, breathy, lilting voice of the artist as she slowly sings and chants the first few words of the rock standard "Hey Joe" ("... where you going with that gun in your hand?"), made famous by Jimi Hendrix.

Oppenheim's rambling incantation is mysterious and drowsy—as if she's in a stupor or slightly possessed. Her voice is as sweet as the room is spare. It's like being in an attic with a little girl who is softly serenading herself. And the installation takes on a chilling, more overtly feminist air when one remembers the answer to the song's initial question: "I'm off to shoot my old lady, she's been messin' around with another man."

Oppenheim transforms the song from a glorification of the tragically wronged male outlaw into a kind of hymn to his female victim. Suddenly, the roving spots which initially felt circus-like become prison searchlights sweeping through the night. Unlike the empty spaces of her conceptual forebears, Oppenheim's room reverberates with a palpable, haunting presence.—*Jerry Saltz*

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