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In “Kessler’s Circus,” at Deitch Projects, Jon Kessler’s motorized video-equipped contraptions are deployed inside an Army tent.

JON KESSLER

Kessler's Circus

Deitch Projects

76 Grand Street, SoHo

Through April 4

Jon Kessler and his raging machines are at it again. In a nod to [Alexander Calder](#)'s similarly inventive but emotionally very different "Circus," Mr. Kessler has installed his funky, motorized and video-equipped contraptions under a big top in the form of a green Army-surplus tent. With all their moving parts exposed, they give the impression of works by an ingenious, possibly crazy Iraq war veteran.

In most of the constructions, store-bought G.I. Joe-type dolls are objects of sadistic abuse. A sitting, pantless soldier is dragged around in circles on his backside. Black oil pours over a prostrate figure. A drum papered with a photograph of blue sky and fair-weather clouds revolves behind a dark-skinned, blindfolded and hogtied prisoner in an orange jumpsuit. A pair of amputated legs dance manically.

In almost every piece a video camera records the action and relays it to one of about three-dozen monitors installed on beat-up metal shelves, creating a dimension of hypermediated confusion and moral chaos.

In another room a life-size, mechanized man with no arms and long, matted gray hair and beard sits in a hospital bed. Eerily, he tilts his head this way and that, wrinkles his rubbery brow and shifts his lifelike eyes back and forth. This old veteran is a piercing symbol of the war's collateral damage and its aging effect on our nation's collective soul. **KEN JOHNSON**