

## AGITPROP TO ARCADIAN

### **Gently Turning a Kaleidoscope of Visions**

Michael Kimmelman

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The fall exhibitions are on view at the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, filling galleries on its first, second and third floors. There is a site-specific installation, four photography exhibitions, a video project and two group shows, one focused on cultural identity and the other on abstract painting, and numerous smaller projects scattered throughout the building. The center is at 22-25 Jackson Avenue, at 46th Street, Long Island City, Queens. Information: (718) 784-2084. Jon Kessler The Palace at 4 a.m. Through Feb. 6

Sprawling through P.S. 1's tall third floor, Jon Kessler's "Palace at 4 a.m." ratchets up his technological wizardry to service a gimmicky but extremely diverting installation whose black-humored theme is the United States going to hell in a handbasket. The work's title, borrowed from Giacometti's sculpture, is meant, Mr. Kessler has said, to evoke "the insanity that happens at that hour when no one is watching."

He was thinking about Abu Ghraib, and the work entails dozens of surveillance cameras, along with bunkerlike clusters of television monitors capturing cropped images of soldiers, helicopters, cockpits, the World Trade Center towers and the Bush war team. The images are blown up on the walls and multiplied in series. These are joined by G. I. Joe action figures and ripped-up, reconstituted cutouts of fashion models from magazine spreads, which thicken the general stew of violence, voyeurism and exploitation.

Contraptions send cameras zooming like smart bombs into a photograph of the new Museum of Modern Art, and spinning around a toy model of a swarthy, shaggy-haired old man like an interrogator circling a suspect. Borrowing from veteran tinkerers like Dennis Oppenheim, Bruce Nauman and Nam June Paik, Mr. Kessler also uses cameras and monitors so that one can't be seen with the other, and he devises towering grids of flashing screens. All this happens to the relentless click-click-clush of machinery.

Admirable, as much for its deployment of lush color and minimal sound as for its mechanics and politics, the whole thing is a tour de force of agitprop.