

ART IN REVIEW

Jon Kessler: 'The Web'

By Karen Rosenberg

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Swiss Institute

18 Wooster Street, between Grand and Canal Streets, SoHo

Through April 28

With all his usual bells and whistles, as well as some new ones, Jon Kessler nimbly mocks the art world's techno-dependency in his kinetic multimedia installation "[The Web.](#)" It's best experienced with a smartphone or tablet in hand, after downloading the related app, but anyone can stumble into the piece and become part of Mr. Kessler's "Matrix"-like dystopia.

As you negotiate a hive of whirring machinery, live-feed video monitors, modified Apple advertisements, robotic mannequins in hoodies and blue machine-knit fabric, you will see yourself and other visitors on various screens. You can control some of what you see with the app by taking photographs that appear in different parts of the installation, but you may find that your selfie pops up in some awkward places (there is a good deal of bathroom humor involved).

Throughout, rotating and sliding contraptions evoke the self-destructing machines of the sculptor Jean Tinguely — as does, perhaps, the periodic chime of a Mac starting up.



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Free and open to the public

(The piece, commissioned by the Métamatic Research Initiative in Amsterdam, travels to the [Museum Tinguely](#) in Basel in October.)

There are two parts to Mr. Kessler's critique; one has to do with rampant photo sharing as a cultural experience, and the other is more about the art world's fidelity to the Apple brand and aesthetic. (Go to any art fair or museum and you will see phalanxes of iPads deployed for purposes commercial and educational.)

The Apple obsession drags "The Web" from satire down into parody; it's less trenchant, ultimately, than Mr. Kessler's antiwar, anti-surveillance masterpiece from 2005, ["The Palace at 4 a.m."](#) But the interactive element is remarkably effective; it's a kind of short-circuited social network in which shared images stay on-site instead of zooming around the Internet — the closest thing art may have, in this moment, to a captive audience.