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ART IN REVIEW; Martin Kersels -- 'Tumble Room'

By GRACE GLUECK

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Deitch Projects

76 Grand Street, SoHo

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Although seemingly a habitat for little girls, Martin Kersels's "Tumble Room," a small, sweet child's room replete with furniture, dolls, stuffed toys and other amenities, behaves quite viciously.

Mounted on a circular track that spins at four revolutions per minute, it slams its contents up, down, back and forth. Over the run of the show, it has gradually reduced most of them to smithereens. By centrifugal force the trashed furnishings are spat out through a huge square gap cut into one side of the room, littering a fenced enclosure with the shards.

A video accompanies this mayhem. It shows a dancer performing in the rotating 9-by-11-foot chamber while its contents are still bolted to the floor. Shades of Fred Astaire! She walks on the walls, hangs upside down from the ceiling and performs all sorts of graceful balletic maneuvers with perfect aplomb. Mr. Kersels also participates, but separately. A strapping personage in an orange shirt and zebra-striped pants, he nimbly negotiates the whirling room whose furniture, now released from bolts, flies at him from every angle.

Mr. Kersels is a performance-based artist from Los Angeles, where comic material of the Keystone Kops kind has long found its way into art, a means of épatering the bourgeoisie like cream pies in the face. The performances in the room are amusing enough, but the room's own performance, while fascinating to watch, is a heinous case of child-furniture battering. GRACE GLUECK