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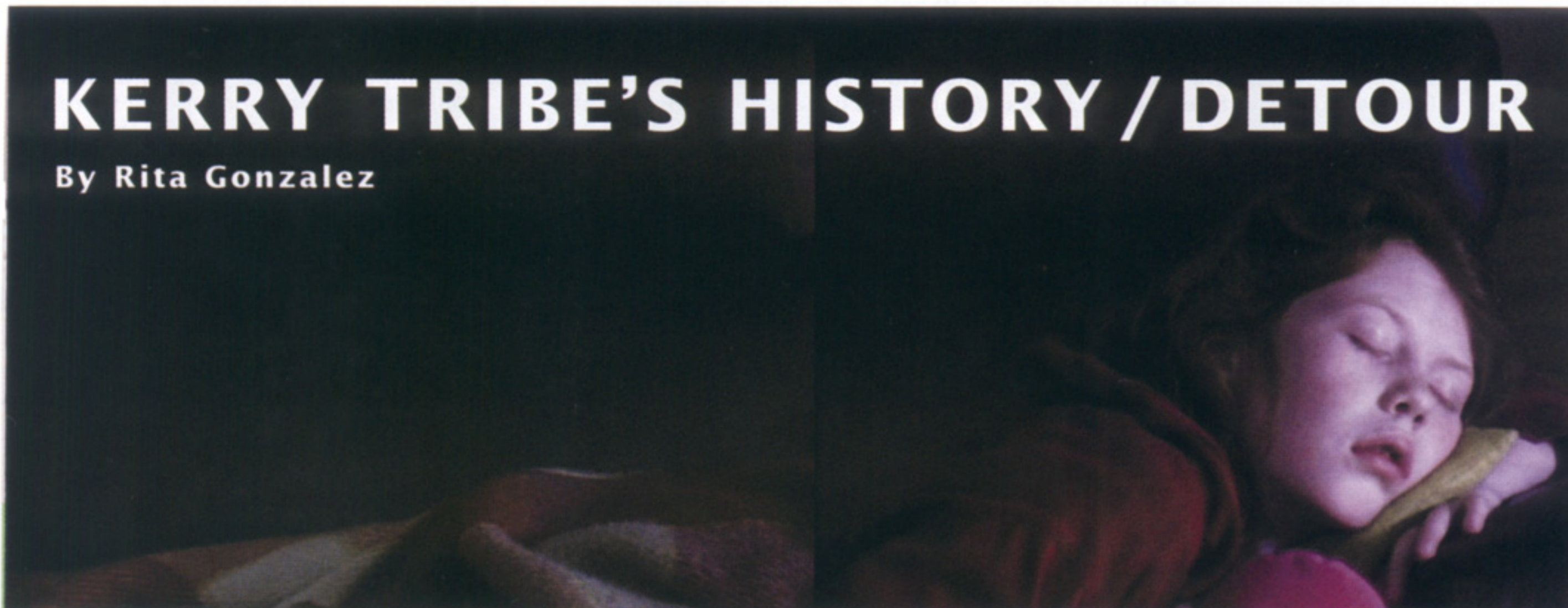
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"Do you remember last time, when we talked of existing and existence?" Kerry Tribe's Here & Elsewhere

KERRY TRIBE'S HISTORY / DETOUR

By Rita Gonzalez



From *Here & Elsewhere*, by Kerry Tribe.

What one may assume about a moment in history past, about its fibrous creases, its smells and its sounds, is certainly difficult to assess. Documentary film attempts to return the viewer to a moment in time, either through "direct" observation or through thick description by an authentic subject, a firsthand accountant. Kerry Tribe is a young artist working (presently in Los Angeles) and grappling with documentary's assumptions of historical accuracy. Tribe's interest is in the partial truths of documentary and the "documentary" disclosures of fiction. Her work in video and film, as well as her more performative public inquiries, draws an amorphous shape of the historical moment, one misshapen by the inflections of memory and forgetting.

Tribe comes to her practice through a theoretical/praxis documentary – what Catherine Russell has described elsewhere as "experimental ethnography." Feminism, post-structuralism, and the critical tendencies of postmodernism all feed modes of experimental ethnography, challenging the tenets of documentary's sobriety and authenticity. Recently Tribe completed a double-projection video installation entitled *Here & Elsewhere*, an evocation of Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's twelve part experimental television series *FRANCE/TOUR/DÉTOUR/DEUX/ENFANT* (1977-78).

FRANCE/TOUR/DÉTOUR/DEUX/ENFANT has been described by critic J. Hoberman as, "a typically bizarre and hilarious

meditation on childhood as an institution." Godard and Miéville labeled their documentary project, "a study in twelve movements," and each "movement" was composed by a particular ideological or philosophical query posed to two eight-year olds, Camille Virolleaud and Arnaud Martin. Colin MacCabe points out that Miéville was chiefly responsible for Godard's sustained address of the image's function in day to day life. Yet as Hoberman notes, Godard and Miéville ultimately produced a "bizarre" interjection in the lives of the children. The staccato title of the twelve part series is a succinct example of what Gilles Deleuze has described as Godard's authorial "stuttering." To stutter is to fall in a place in language, to temporarily be put out of the flow. What Tribe accomplishes in her own take on Godard is a similar stuttering, and like Godard's, it is a stuttering-through of received ideas and images.

Tribe's highly evocative title, *Here & Elsewhere*, gives us the push and pull of her relationship to Godard and Miéville, to their authorship, and in a larger part, to their own documentary stance. What is contained "here" in this video diptych is the "elsewhere" of a number of framing contexts, including Tribe's selection of ten-year old Audrey Wollen (daughter of film scholar/arts curator Peter Wollen and writer Leslie Dick) to fill in for the role of Camille Virolleaud. In a sense, the transformation of Godard and Miévilles' work shows through in the intense personalization in Tribe's project – the way in which the video comes close to family portrait.

The interrogator in *Here & Elsewhere* questions the young girl with philosophical queries on the nature of photographic representation, the differences between "being" oneself and "playing oneself" before a camera, as well as staggering questions on history and memory. The astonishingly mature Audrey Wollen answers all these questions with absolute aplomb. "Do you remember the last time, when we talked of existing and existence?" Her father asks this in his crisp British accent, leaving the impression that these interrogative exercises are common occurrences in the household.

Tribe's attempt is always careful, hers is an integrative research project, yet also an artistic intervention. Worked into the project are her own concerns: how can she reiterate the political insistence of the series in a "here" so removed from the "elsewhere?" Considering Tribe's own "elsewhere," her own formation as daughter of a constitutional law scholar and a feminist involved in politics, there is no doubt that shades of her own experience are "documented" here. Tribe, like a number of artists contemplating the role of the political in contemporary art, feels the need to position their own work and lives in relation to their parent's generation. The experiment of *Here & Elsewhere* intends to re-present the documentary format in the installation environment. Tribe provides a room filled with over-sized pillows that evokes a 1970s rumpus room (think of the decor of the rumpus room in Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm*). The double projections border one another but at times glide together synchronously, at times careen into one another. Tribe's dual cameras are constantly diverting information and extending time and space. The movement creates what Tribe has noted to be a "panorama that could never have a fixed point of view."

Tribe's documentary fictions shatter the flow of the real, testimonials are exposed as "auditions" and the spontaneous, telling gesture is assessed as a documentary performative code. The veracity of interview transcription is questioned in her early work *The Audition Tapes (Another Home Movie by Kerry Tribe)* [1998]. While in the more recent *Double* [2001], Tribe casts young actresses to play "Kerry Tribe," a recent New York transplant. Roberto Rossellini once said of his films, "Things are there. Why manipulate them?" Tribe says of the "things" that make up documentary and fiction, that truth is actually "here and elsewhere."