

## KERRY TRIBE

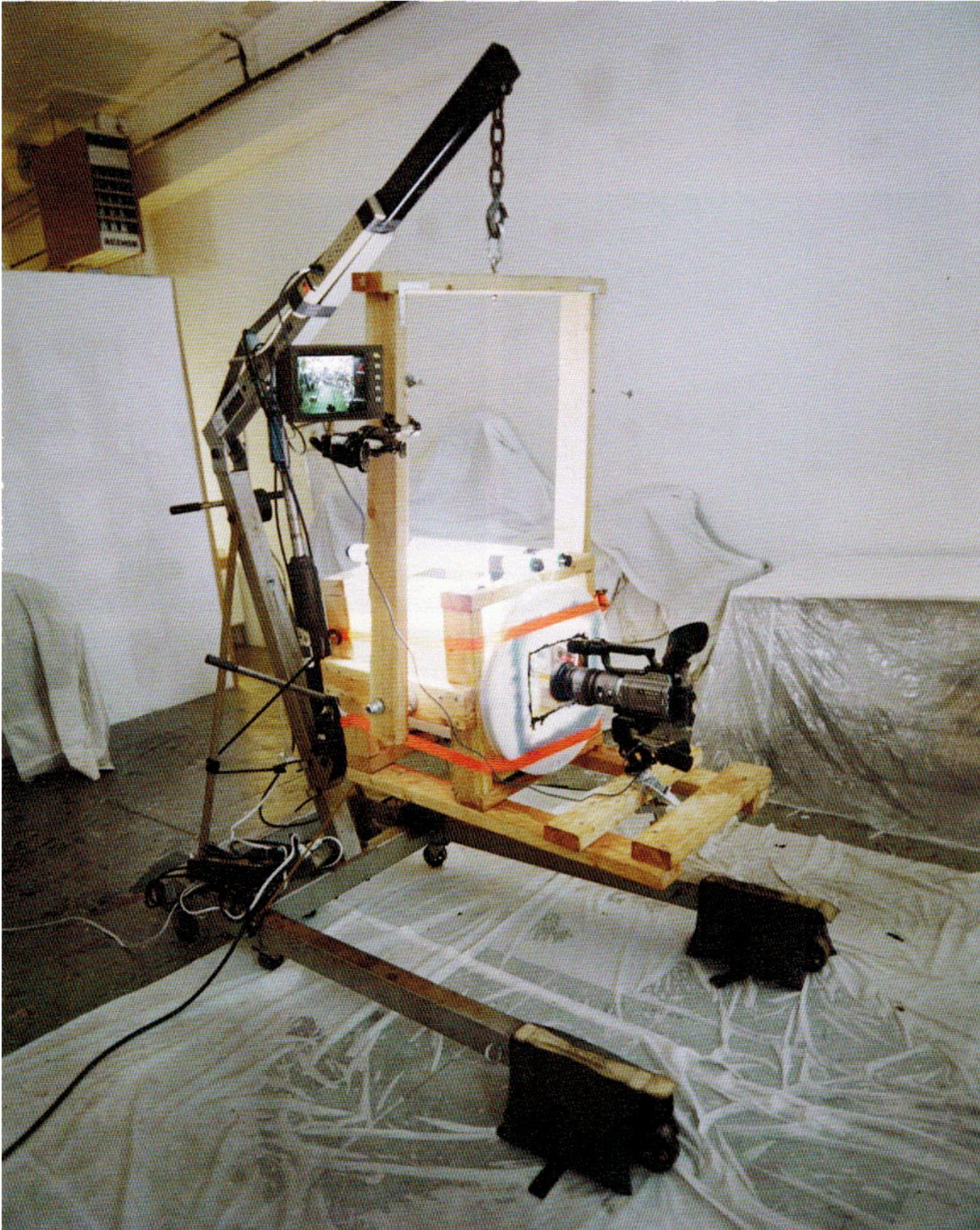
Kerry Tribe's film and video works are meditations on cognition, using image, text, and sound to explore what she calls "the phenomenology of memory." Including such setups as multiple projections and timed loops, her installations are specifically designed to underscore the content of her work. The influence of the structural films of the 1960s and 1970s is evident in Tribe's fascination with the literal mechanics of moving images and in her notion that the medium is capable of mirroring cognitive processes in a profoundly generative way. She rarely disguises the means of her work's presentation, instead incorporating the machinery inherent to its existence into the reading of the work. The film projectors, monitors, tape recorders, and such are like placeholders for minds that are processing received information and then (quite literally, in the case of the moving-image works) projecting it back into the world. It is no accident that these machines often verge on the obsolete. Tribe's use of film and audiotape as well as obscure, often customized looping systems works as a commentary on memory, physically emulating how it functions in the brain.

Through conceptual structures and use of mechanical technology, Tribe balances the supernatural aspects of her stories of cognition with an analytical approach to subjects that are simultaneously quotidian and mysterious, recalling a poet's ability to distill moments of wonder into concise language. The presence of the equipment injects a type of physical and aural static into the work that roots viewers in the actual space of the installation. In Tribe's first live performance work, *Hollis Frampton's Critical Mass* (2010), viewers were confronted with two actors in a public space who recited the complete stuttering dialogue from Frampton's radically edited film of a romantic spat, *Critical Mass* (1971), which Tribe painstakingly transcribed from what had originally been a spontaneous performance for the camera. For *H.M.* (2009), Tribe devised a configuration of two projectors to show the same film twice, side by side, with a twenty-second delay between the images projected on the left and on the right. The film centers on the true story of a man whose memory was reduced to twenty-second intervals by an experimental brain surgery meant to cure his epilepsy, and the presentation echoes its subject's experience of time.

Intrigued by a drawing of a *Parnassius mnemosyne* butterfly by the Russian author Vladimir Nabokov that accompanies his memoir *Speak, Memory*, Tribe researched the origin of the insect's name and found that Mnemosyne was the personification of memory in ancient Greek mythology. Her film *Parnassius mnemosyne* (2010) is an animation of a microscopic image of the butterfly's wing, which is configured into a Möbius strip, its beginning and end inextricably connected to form a loop that runs through the projector and flips to reverse the image with each rotation. An avid lepidopterist, Nabokov included his drawings of butterflies in his memoir, which was notoriously published in numerous iterations. Recalling the shape of a butterfly, the continuous strip of film also suggests the memoirist's repetition. Tribe's installation *Milton Torres Sees a Ghost* (2010) is similarly illustrative of memory. Two audio decks are positioned at opposite ends of a room. Through one deck, the magnetic tape is imprinted with American fighter pilot Milton Torres's recently declassified account of a UFO sighting in 1957. The audio is erased as the tape passes through the second deck, enacting an aural form of redaction. The continuous black line of tape encircling the space resembles the thick black marks on the censored paper documents of Torres's testimony, a copy of which is included in the installation.

Willful historical revisionism is also central to *The Last Soviet* (2010), which tells the story of Russian cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev's ordeal on the *Mir* space station during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Video footage of a miniature model of the interior of *Mir*, constructed in Tribe's studio, is intercut with various archival materials related to this moment in history, including film footage of a performance of the ballet *Swan Lake* that was used to censor Russian news broadcasts of the political turmoil, images of tanks on the streets of Moscow, and photographs depicting aspects of the Russian space program. Alternating throughout the image sequences, a male voice recounts the forgotten cosmonaut's story from a personal point of view in English with Russian subtitles while a female voice gives a historical account of the period in Russian with English subtitles. Tribe constructed the dialogue, which was recited by actors, so that there is a brief delay between the stories and the images that they apparently explain. As with the propaganda of the Soviet government, it is impossible to distinguish fact from intentional fiction in the stories.

Working with trained and untrained actors; using both scripts and improvisation; combining animation, found footage, and original scenes; and incorporating into her work techniques that are typical of the documentary format, like interviews and reenactments, Tribe employs a wide range of image-making strategies in order to delve deeply into past incidents. Through these means, she questions the reliability of our memories and our stores of knowledge, suggesting that the subjectivity of our experiences is constantly interfering with our ability to apprehend truth. Indeed, her works propose that perhaps there is no objective representation of truth but only the thousands of stories that constitute our memories. While we depend on our memories for the maintenance of our identities and to comprehend our surroundings, Tribe calls attention to memory's fragility, its malleability, and the inevitability of its erosion.



Kerry Tribe, *Mir*, 2010 (cat. no. 57)



At that speed one catches  
television broadcasts



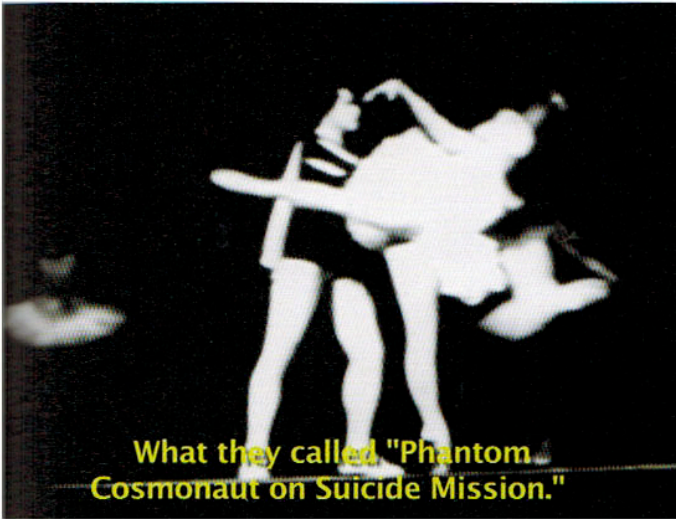
You can see with your own  
eyes how small Earth really is.



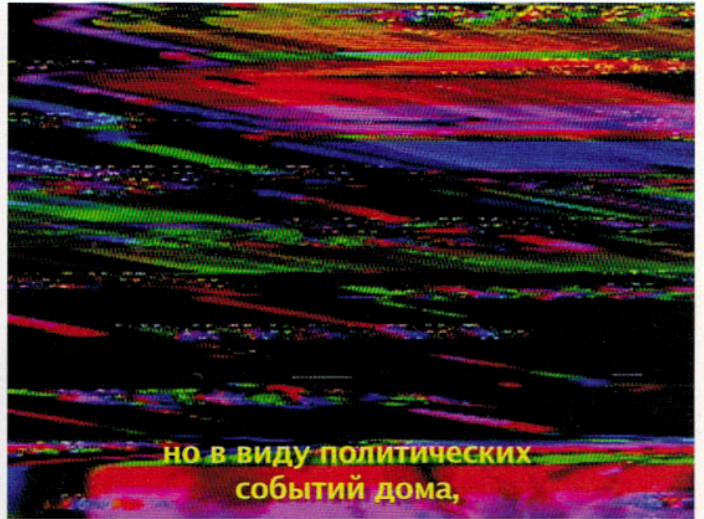
We see objects that  
appear to be floating.



мы не могли вернуть  
Сергея по плану.



What they called "Phantom  
Cosmonaut on Suicide Mission."



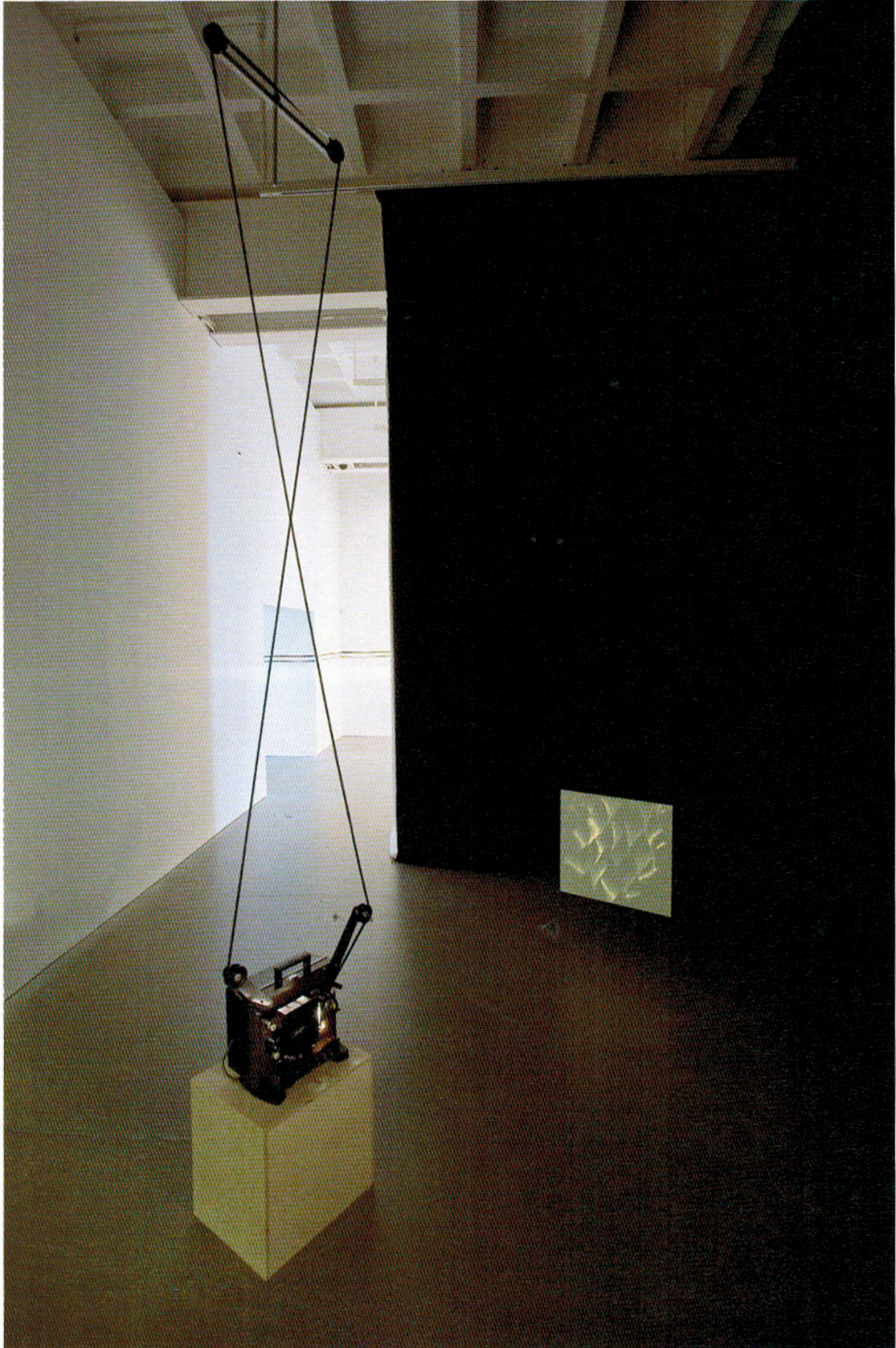
но в виду политических  
событий дома,



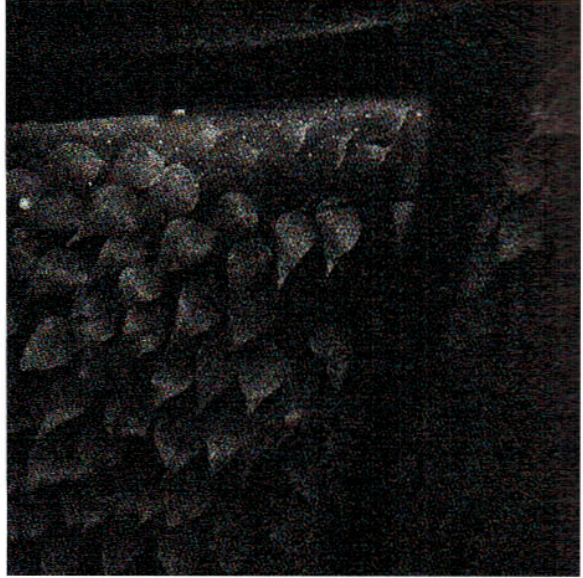
головные боли,  
головокружение, тошнота.

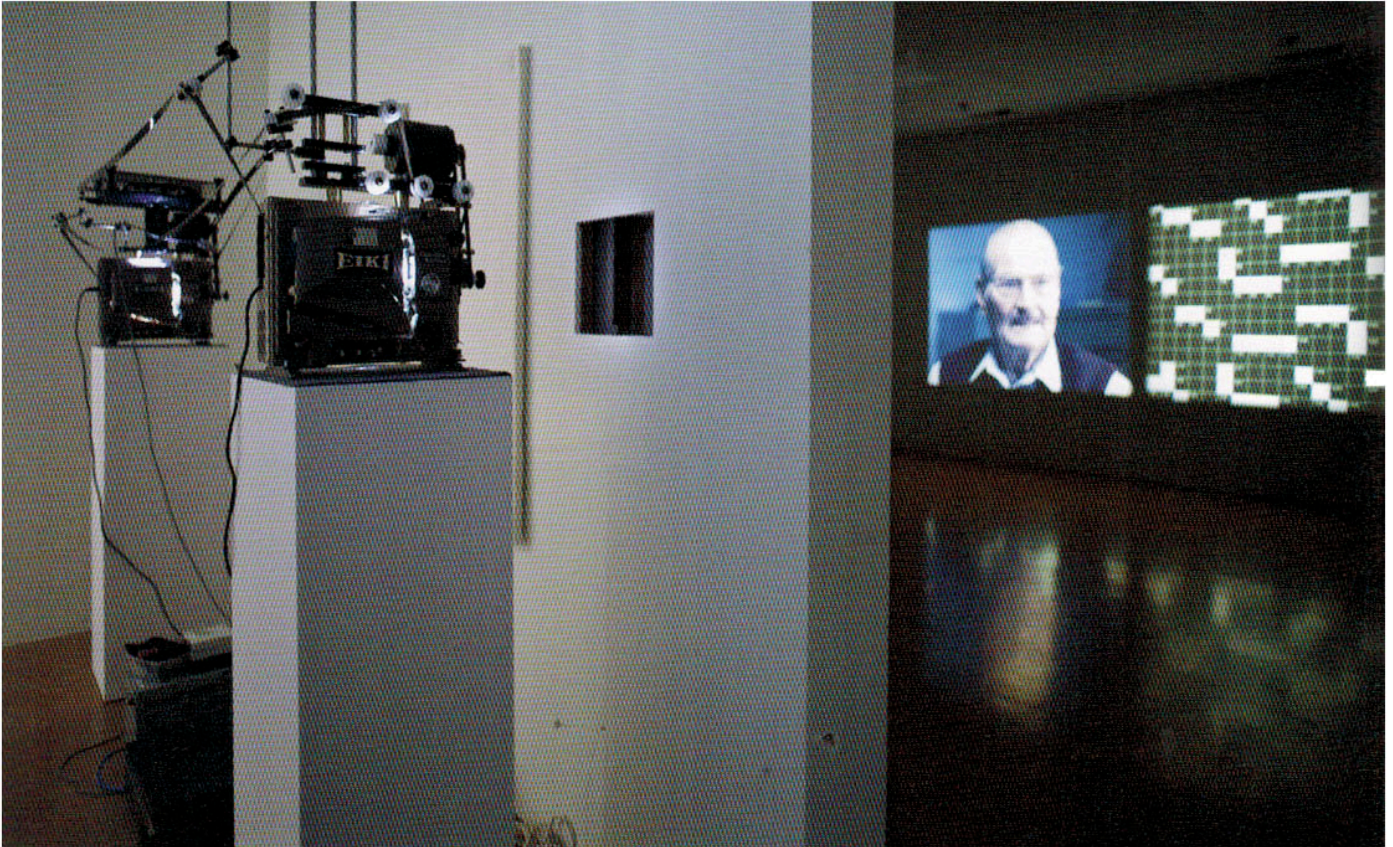


This footage shows the  
situation in Moscow in August.

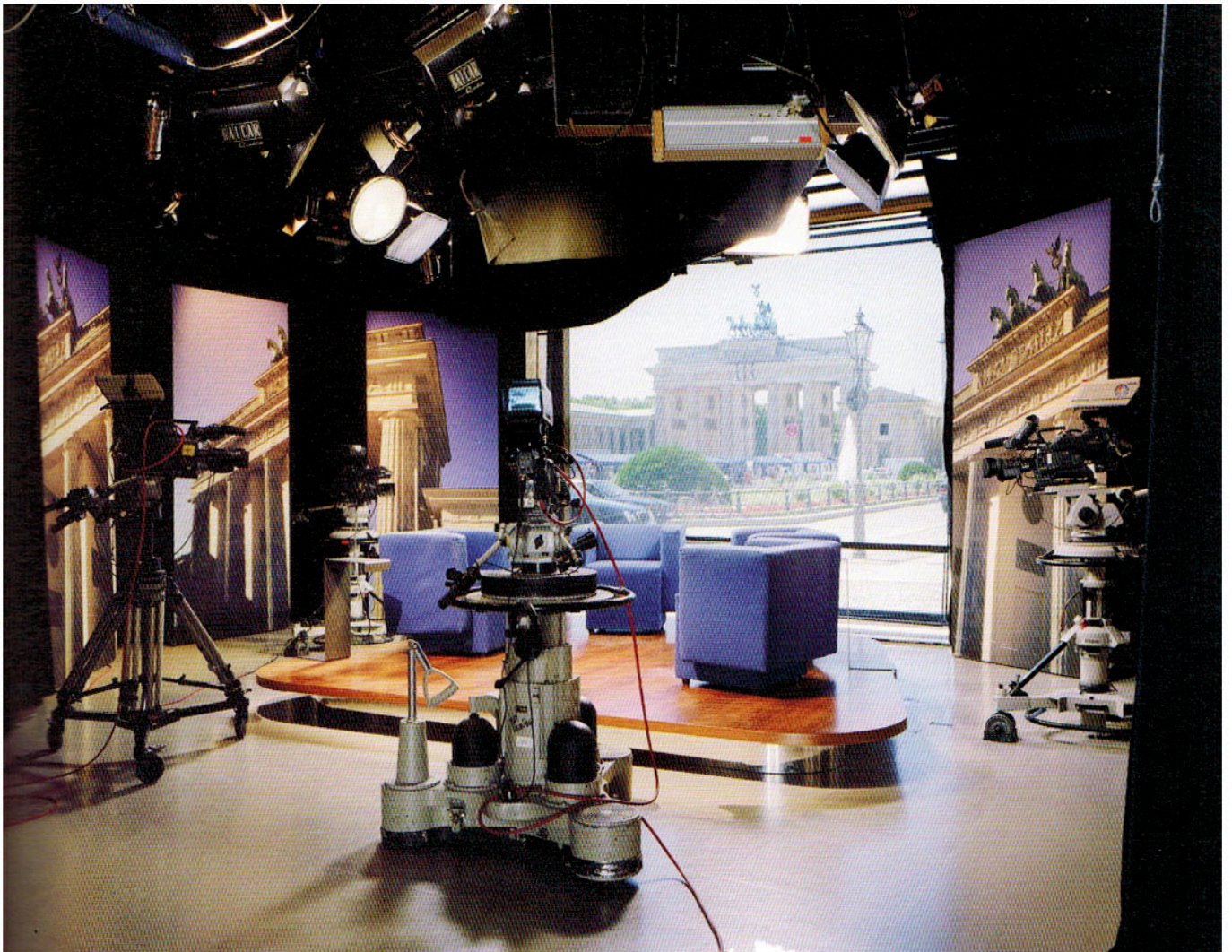


Kerry Tribe, stills from *Parnassius mnemosyne*, 2010 (cat. no. 58)





Kerry Tribe, *H.M.*, 2009; double projection of a single 16mm film, color, sound; 18:30 min. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase. Installation view, 1301PE, Los Angeles (cat. no. 57)



Kerry Tribe, *DFA Studio am Brandenburger Tor*, 2007; color photograph, edition of 5; 52 x 44 in. (132.1 x 111.8 cm). Courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles.