



# **PIRILLOTTA CRIST**

**BIG HEARTEDNESS, BE MY NEIGHBOR**

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2021–JUNE 6, 2022**

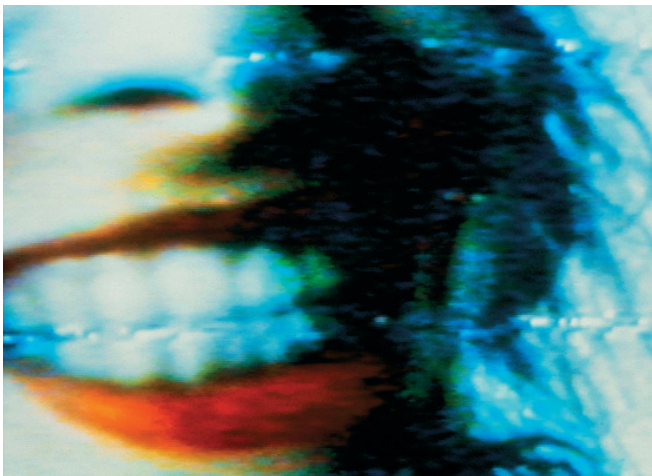
# PIPILOTTI RIST: BREAKING GOOD

Pipilotti Rist (b. 1962, Grabs, Switzerland; lives in Zürich) once fantasized about soaring into the air, flying over neighborhoods, and peering into houses, where people kiss and babies crawl and “most have the television running.” To her, “the world in front of, in back of, or between the window and TV panes is the biggest video installation” she could imagine, pointing to two of the major themes of Rist’s ecstatically expansive and technologically voracious approach to video over the past three decades. First, television is a primary site not because of its status as a broadcast, surveillance, pop cultural, or advertising medium, as have been the central concerns of many artists of Rist’s generation who broke video out of the box monitor, but rather because a collective unconscious resides in video—an electric collective unconscious that Rist prizes as the “synthesis of music, language, painting, movement, mangy mean pictures, time, sexuality, lighting, hectic action, and technology” and commends as the fortune of TV viewers and video artists alike. Second, museums are big, public living rooms, communal spaces in which guests are received and social rituals enacted and in which we gather together around “magic lamps.”

From the outset, Rist saw in video a mirror of the subconscious. She understood the buzz and hum of its poor pictures as the medium’s “nervous, inner world qualities.” In her single-channel videos, she experimented with the world “in back of” the TV “pane,” staging the effort to break through the screen as a break down. The by turns manic and depressive, bare-breasted marionette of *I’m Not the Girl Who Misses Much* (1986; fig. 1) pictures hysteria as a form of resistance belonging to the disenfranchised. Likewise, the women of (*Entlastungen*) *Pipilottis Fehler* ((Absolutions) Pipilotti’s Mistakes; 1988), like Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, take on the shocks of the world by dramatically rehearsing them, repeatedly collapsing to the ground and rising up. In these works, digital distortion, color staining, and hyper speed function both as analogs to human psychology and as the charms by which Rist lures the subconscious out of video machines.

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All quotations from Pipilotti Rist, *Nam June Paik: Jardin Illuminé*, trans. Jeanne Haunschild (Zürich: Galerie Hauser & Wirth), 1993, 13-15.



**Cover** PIPLOTTI RIST,  
*OPEN MY GLADE*  
(*FLATTEN*) (STILL), 2000  
SINGLE-CHANNEL VIDEO  
(COLOR, SILENT) INSTAL-  
LATION  
9:52 MINUTES



**Fig. 1** PIPLOTTI RIST,  
*I'M NOT THE GIRL WHO*  
*MISSSES MUCH* (STILL), 1986  
7:46 MINUTES  
MUSIC BY PIPLOTTI RIST  
AFTER "HAPPINESS IS A WARM  
GUN" BY JOHN LENNON AND  
PAUL MCCARTNEY

Further, in exploring the space “between the window and TV panes,” Rist shrewdly perceived that the television set had become a member of the family, such that to work on video was to do a kind of family therapy. This is the subtext of her 1994 installation *Das Zimmer* (The Room; fig. 2), in which absurdly oversized living room furniture infantilizes the viewer, who can plop down on the gigantic red pleather sofa and use an enormous remote control to channel surf through the artist’s single-channel videos on a normal-sized television—as if to say, scale and memory are subjective and relative, but the television set is a constant. (And just imagine if you had, as a child, watched with your family *Blutclip* [Blood Clip; 1993], an exuberant, rock-and-roll revelry of menstrual blood! Perhaps this is what would play on prime-time TV in utopia, or at least in a non-shame-based society.)

Though the television may be the magic lamp, for Rist the flat, rectangular format of the screen is a vexing convention. Such is the premise of *Open My Glade* (*Flatten*) (2000), in which a figure presses her face into grotesque contortions against a pane of glass, as if pushing against the surface of the screen. When it originally appeared on a digital billboard in New York City’s Times Square, *Open My Glade* served as a counterimage to mass-media, commercial representations of ideal female beauty. Its meaning redoubles on the basis of the

artist’s frequent comparison of screens and skin: the woman seems to want to break out of her skin, so that she may see how the other sees and know what her lover feels when they kiss. Such is the wish of much of Rist’s work, which has long been noted for its dissolution of boundaries of interior and exterior. So, too, the figure struggling to break out of the boxes and frames of cliché and stereotype also personifies Rist’s desire, as an artist, to break video out of the box monitor and the theatrical black box.

Hence the catharsis of *Ever Is Over All* (1997; fig. 3), among Rist’s first architecturally scaled immersive installations. In this frequently referenced work, a Dorothy/Alice/Virgin Mary figure gleefully smashes car windows as she glides down the street, her joyous rebellion and her unapologetic pleasure eliciting a vicarious thrill; the liberation of the good girl is made that much sweeter by a female police officer’s approving salute and knowing smile. The double projection straddles a corner, with a worm’s-eye view of undeniably sexual red hot poker flowers, or torch lilies, on the right bleeding onto the feminist revenge fantasy on the left, seeming to dissolve the walls. In this regard, the smashing of the car windows signifies a breaking of the flat rectangle of video. With this work, as with numerous others, the living room enters the museum by way of large cushions provided for lounging on the plush-carpeted floor, inviting a kind of bodily



**Fig. 2** PIPLOTTI RIST, *DAS ZIMMER* (THE ROOM), 1994  
MONITOR, SOFA, ARMCHAIR, STANDING LAMP, POSTER, VIDEO PROGRAM, AND REMOTE CONTROL



**Fig. 3** PIPLOTTI RIST, *EVER IS OVER ALL* (STILL), 1997  
TWO-CHANNEL VIDEO (COLOR, SOUND) PROJECTION, CARPET, AND PILLOWS  
4 AND 8:25 MINUTES  
MUSIC BY ANDERS GUGGISBERG AND PIPLOTTI RIST



comfort that is normally reserved for the privacy of the home. Indeed, carpet, curtains, and cushions are devices Rist uses to soften the hard, orthogonal architecture of the white cube; to make warm the cold authority of the institution; and—to the degree that the domestic sphere is associated with the feminine and the public sphere with the masculine—to feminize the museum.

Break down, break through, break out—with *Pixelwald* (Pixel Forest; 2016, fig. 4), Rist *broke up* the screen into its smallest discrete digital video element, the pixel. Conceived as a correction to the bombastic rhetoric around virtual reality technology, *Pixel Forest* aims for a more truly immersive experience. The viewer physically enters the video image, each pixel of which glows through labia-shaped lampshades strung on thousands of suspended wire strands. Neither the world in front of nor in back of the TV screen, this is the world of the screen itself. Ever watchful of the power dynamic between camera and viewer, insistently eschewing panoptical or omniscient views, Rist invites the viewer to be the agent of her own

movement through the spatialized video field. *Pixel Forest* functions like a brain (the colored orbs imitate synapses, which allow electrical signals to pass from one neuron to another) and like a body (the sparkling of the genital lamps suggests a female orgasm specifically, with its dispersion of sensation, its unlocatability, and its (im)pure pleasure). Rist has always rejected the division of the organic and the mechanical, and here she coaxes a euphoric state out of the machine, one that recalls the pulses and currents running through the sensate body.

*Pipilotti Rist: Big Heartedness, Be My Neighbor* imagines the museum not as public living room but as a shared backyard. In keeping with the artist's inversions of interior and exterior, the entrance to the central thirty-five-foot-tall gallery space of The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA has been refashioned as an opening in a chain-link fence, of the kind that everyone in a neighborhood uses as a shortcut; the gallery is conceived as a semi-public, neglected space, one that is not so much owned as it is used, governed by custom more so than law. At the back

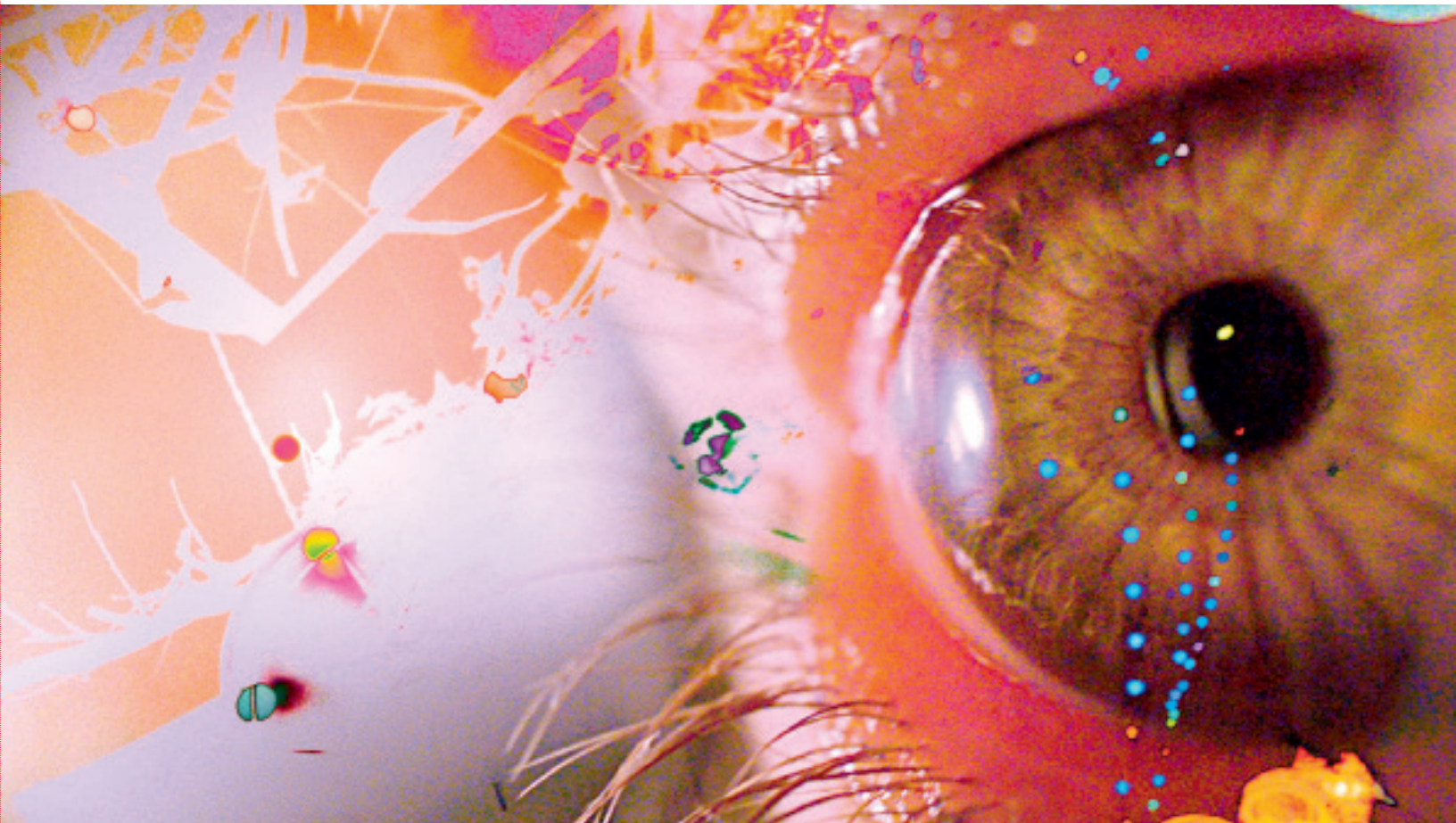
**Fig. 4** PIPILOTTI RIST, *PIXELWALD (MOTHERBOARD) (PIXEL FOREST (MUTTERPLATTE))*, 2016, SINGLE-CHANNEL VIDEO (COLOR, SOUND) INSTALLATION WITH HANGING LED-LIGHT LAMPS AND LABIA SHADES OF ALAMARICE, LOOP VARIABLE



of the gallery, *Pixel Forest* functions as the woods, and skirting the shared backyard are galleries akin to houses, the projections and screens inside each a magic lamp.

Projected on the walls and floor of this in-between zone, Rist's new family of works—the projections *Neighbors Without Fences*, *Neighbor Understand on the Ground*, and *Neighbor's Alley* (all 2021) and the monitor-based *Peeping Freedom* works (2021; fig. 5)—trains the constantly roving camera eye on aged skin as well as rusted metal and overgrown weeds, thus extending a three-decade-long effort to get as close to skin as possible, to make the thin membrane that divides interior and exterior a terrain to explore rather than a barrier to obey.

Neighbor means “one who dwells near,” and to neighbor is to “border on or be near to.” In parallel with Rist's conviction that the world in front of and in back of the TV is the biggest installation she can imagine, the *Neighbors* family inhabits the space just in front of—and just behind—the eyelid. Though it is not ultimately possible to see how the other sees, philosophy and science and poetry and Rist give it a shot. She invites us to do what is perhaps a close second—to be neighbors, to be near one another, for the other side of the collective unconscious is conscious collectivity.



**Fig. 5** PIPILOTTI RIST, *PEEPING FREEDOM PAVILION* (STILL), 2021, SINGLE-CHANNEL VIDEO (COLOR, SILENT) INSTALLATION, LOOP VARIABLE © PIPILOTTI RIST. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, HAUSER & WIRTH, AND LUHRING AUGUSTINE.



# CHECKLIST

All works by Pipilotti Rist (b. 1962, Grabs, Switzerland; lives in Zürich)

Unless otherwise noted, all works courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and Luhring Augustine

**The Innocent Collection**, 1985–ca. 2032  
Paper, cardboard, plastic, and Styrofoam

**I'm Not the Girl Who Misses Much**, 1986  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
7:46 minutes  
Music by Pipilotti Rist after "Happiness Is a Warm Gun" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney

**Sexy Sad I**, 1987  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
4:32 minutes  
Music by Lori Hersberger after "Sexy Sadie" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney

**(Entlastungen) Pipilottis Fehler ((Absolutions) Pipilotti's Mistakes)**, 1988  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
11:18 minutes  
Music by Les Reines Prochaines including Pipilotti Rist and Hans Feigenwinter

**You Called Me Jacky**, 1990  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
4:02 minutes  
Music "Jacky and Edna" by Kevin Coyne

**Als der Bruder meiner Mutter geboren wurde, duftete es nach wilden Birnenblüten vor dem braungebrannten Sims (When My Mother's Brother Was Born It Smelled Like Wild Pear Blossom in Front of the Brown-burnt Sill)**, 1992  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
3:48 minutes  
Music by Heinz Rohrer and Pipilotti Rist

**Drei Köpfe (Three Heads)**, 1992/2019  
Two-channel video (black-and-white and color, silent), spherical monitor, mirror with built-in monitor, wig, plastic doll with glowing eyes, and two books  
Loop variable

**Pickelporno (Pimple Porno)**, 1992  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
12 minutes  
Music by Les Reines Prochaines including Pipilotti Rist and Peter Bräker

**Blutclip (Blood Clip)**, 1993  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
2:40 minutes  
Music "Yeah Yeah Yeah" by Sophisticated Boom Boom Switzerland

**Das Zimmer (The Room)**, 1994  
Monitor, sofa, armchair, standing lamp, poster, video program, and remote control

**Selbstlos im Lavabad (Selfless in the Bath of Lava)**, 1995  
Single-channel video (color, sound) installation  
6:20 minutes

**Digesting Impressions (Gastric endoscopy journey)**, 1996/2014  
Single-channel video (color, silent), spherical monitor, and elastane swimsuit  
3 minutes  
Kunstmuseum Bern, gift from Stiftung Kunst Heute  
Exhibition copy

**Sip My Ocean**, 1996  
Two-channel video (color, sound) projection, carpet, and pillows  
10:22 and 5:11 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Pipilotti Rist after "Wicked Game" by Chris Isaak

**Ever Is Over All**, 1997  
Two-channel video (color, sound) projection, carpet, and pillows  
4 and 8:25 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Pipilotti Rist

**My Boy, My Horse, My Dog**, 1997  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
3:47 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Pipilotti Rist, vocals by Saadet Türköz

**If I Am Lonely I Can Work It Out**, 1998  
Desktop carousel, drawings, photographs, and various personal objects

**Adaptation of I Couldn't Agree With You More**, 1999  
Two-channel video (color, silent) projection  
9:36 and 8:35 minutes  
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles  
Purchase with funds provided by Audrey M. Irmias  
2000.53

**Open My Glade (Flatten)**, 2000  
Single-channel video (color, silent) installation  
9:52 minutes

**I Want to See How You See (or a Portrait of Cornelia Providoli)**, 2003  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
4:48 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Pipilotti Rist

**Adaptation of Homo Sapiens Sapiens**, 2005/2020  
Single-channel video (color, sound)  
10 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Pipilotti Rist

**Deine Raumkapsel (Your Space Capsule)**, 2006  
Single-channel video (color, sound) projection, wooden box, and mixed media  
10 minutes

**Lap Lamp**, 2006  
Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, standing lamp, and chair  
8:05 minutes

**Another Body (from the Lobe of the Lung Family)**, 2008/2015  
Multi-channel video (color, sound) projection, carpet, and pillows  
16:02 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg and Roland Widmer

**Enlight My Space**, 2008  
Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, bookends, artificial orchid, postcard, glass semispheres, books, miniatures, wooden shelf, and mixed media  
7:27 minutes

**Alles, Alles, Alles (All, All, All)**, 2010/2015  
Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, desk, chaise lounge, and mixed media  
10 minutes

**Funkenbildung der domestizierten Synapsen (Sparking of the Domesticated Synapses)**, 2010  
Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, shelf, and mixed media  
5:34 minutes

**Prisma**, 2011  
Single-channel video (color, silent) projection and replica of a veduta painting  
7:28 minutes

**Iris Ruggel grosse Kirsche (Iris Log Big Cherry)**, 2014  
Single-channel video (color, silent), log, and glass half-sphere  
4:05 minutes  
Raman/Luthra Collection

**Mercy Garden (from the Mercy Work Family)**, 2014  
Multi-channel video (color, sound) projection, carpet, and pillows  
15:14 minutes  
Music by Heinz Rohrer

**Worry Will Vanish Relief (from the Worry Work Family), 2014**

Multi-channel video (color, sound) projection, carpet, and pillows  
10:25 minutes  
Music by Anders Guggisberg

**Tu mich nicht nochmals verlassen (Do Not Abandon Me Again), 2015**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection and bed  
3:37 minutes

**Zweistein (kalzitgelb) (Two-Stone (calcite yellow)), 2015**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, stone, table, books, and glass sphere  
6 minutes

**Die Geduld (The Patience), 2016**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, boulder, and sofa  
12:46 minutes

**Pixel Forest Transformer, 2016**

Hanging LED light installation and media player, edition 2/3  
20:50 minutes  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, 2017.114

**Streichelnder Nachtmahl Kreis (Caressing Dinner Circle), 2017**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection, dining table, and chairs  
20 minutes

**Ich brenne für Dich (I Burn for You), 2018**

Single-channel video (color, silent), LED box, and marble fireplace mantel  
60 minutes

**29 Palms Chandelier, 2019**

Used underpants, aluminum, and lightbulb

**Omvendt øjenlåg (Reversed Eyelid), 2019**

Printed fabric  
Printed by Kvadrat

**The Loretta Bottle, 2019**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection and bottles  
8 minutes

**Neighbor Understand on the Ground, 2021**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection  
30 minutes

**Neighbor's Alley, 2021**

Single-channel video (color, silent) projection  
30 minutes

**Neighbors without Fences, 2021**

Three-channel video (color, sound) projection  
30 minutes  
Music by Tom Huber

**Peeping Freedom Pavilion, 2021**

One-channel video (color, silent) installation  
Loop variable

**Peeping Freedom Shutters, 2021**

Five-channel video (color, silent) installation  
Loop variable

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THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

*Pipilotti Rist: Big Heartedness, Be My Neighbor* is organized by Anna Katz, Curator, with Karlyn Olvido, Curatorial Associate, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

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