

Pipilotti Rist. Ever is Over All

- Dates: October 1, 2026 – January 17, 2027
- Curator: Mikel Onandia

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents *Pipilotti Rist: Ever is Over All*, an exhibition centered on the Swiss artist's video installation of the same name. This video installation brings to a close the Museum's Film & Video program.

Pipilotti Rist has been a central figure within the international video art scene for several decades. She created her first audiovisual works in the 1980s, drawing inspiration from music films, pop culture, emerging media technologies and video art. Early in her career, she developed a distinctive visual language with a powerful sensory and emotional impact.

Presented at the 47th Venice Biennale in 1997, where it earned Rist international recognition and acclaim, *Ever is Over All* is one of her most iconic video installations and a landmark in the history of late 20th - century video art. Created at a time when video was becoming firmly established as an art medium in its own right within museums, the work brings together many of the aesthetic, political, social, environmental, and sensory concerns that have come to define Rist's practice.

Rooted in the context of 1990s video art, a decade marked by the rise of immersive audiovisual installations and the growing convergence of contemporary art and popular visual culture, the work departs from the austere, analytical tone of earlier Conceptual Art. In her work, Pipilotti Rist embraces an aesthetic of color, music, and sensuality reminiscent of music videos and advertising.

Its large scale and immersive nature, together with an evocative soundtrack that shifts between the enigmatic and the melancholic, give the work tremendous visual and conceptual power. Its political and moral implications, including its complex reflections on the relationship between power structures, the female body, private property, collective space, and the environmental impact of individual traffic, also make it strikingly relevant today.

Ever is Over All consists of two synchronized video projections. One shows a young woman, played by Silvana Ceschi, walking calmly down a street in Zurich in a delicate blue dress. In one hand, she carries a large red subtropical flower — a Red Hot Poker, native to sub-Saharan Africa — which she uses to smash the windows of cars parked along the curb, one after another. This repeated act of violence, carried out slowly and openly, contrasts sharply with the gentleness of her movements and the video's lyrical, soothing atmosphere. The second projection features close-ups of flowers filmed with fluid, dynamic camera movements and rendered in intensely saturated colors, creating a sensual, almost hypnotic visual experience. The music, created especially for the work by Pipilotti Rist and fellow artist Anders Guggisberg, is also essential to its dreamlike atmosphere.

One of the video's most significant moments occurs when the protagonist crosses paths with a police officer who, rather than reprimanding her, greets her warmly. This encounter momentarily suspends the established legal and social order, overturning the expectation of punishment and transforming the act of vandalism into a kind of emancipatory fantasy. The absence of legal consequences underscores the

allegorical nature of the action and allows the work to be understood as both a critical and poetic gesture. It can also be understood as a contemporary fairy tale in which the seemingly sacred status of private property is questioned in relation to the ongoing destruction of collective resources.

The flower plays a central symbolic role. Traditionally associated with beauty, fragility, and decoration, it is transformed here into an unexpected instrument of action. Yet rather than seeming purely destructive, the gesture takes on a cathartic quality. This shift in meaning gives the work an intrinsically feminist dimension while also opening it to broader reflections on power, private property, public space, and environmental questions.

The video is also notable for its formal ambiguity. Its intensely saturated colors, the leisurely pace of the editing, and the dreamy musical soundtrack create an atmosphere that tempers the perceived violence. The result is a compelling tension between reason and emotion, prompting viewers to reflect on what we perceive as aggression, on the cultural forces that shape our understanding of public space, and on whether the infrastructure built around cars may itself embody forms of violence that often pass unnoticed.

Seen in this light, the gesture can also be read as a reversal of the long Western artistic tradition of presenting the female body primarily as an object to be observed and controlled.

Biography

Pipilotti Rist (b. 1962, Grabs, Switzerland) began working with video in the 1980s and first attracted attention with early works such as *I'm Not the Girl Who Misses Much* (1986). Her reputation grew over the following decade with works including *Pickelporno* (1992) and *Sip My Ocean* (1996), in which she was already developing the visual language of vivid color and sensory immersion that would come to define her work. Her participation in the 47th Venice Biennale (1997), where she presented *Ever is Over All*, brought her the prize of the Biennale and international recognition.

In 2000, her work *Open My Glade* was shown on the giant screen in Times Square, New York, as part of the Messages to the Public program, bringing video art into the heart of the urban landscape. In 2005, she represented Switzerland at the 51st Venice Biennale with *Homo sapiens sapiens*, an installation projected onto the ceiling of the Church of San Stae that became one of her most critically acclaimed works. During the 2000s, Rist presented major institutional exhibitions, including *Pour Your Body Out* at MoMA in New York (2008), as well as installations and projections such as *À la belle étoile*, shown outside the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2007). In the 2010s, her practice increasingly turned toward large-scale environments. Notable works from this period include *Worry Will Vanish Horizon* (2014) and *Pixel Forest* (2016), which further established her environmental and multisensory approach.

In recent years, Pipilotti Rist's work has maintained a prominent international presence, with major exhibitions including *Prickling Goosebumps & a Humming Horizon* (2023–2024, Hauser & Wirth and Lühring Augustine, New York), *Electric Idyll* (2024, Fire Station, Doha), and *Hand Me Your Trust* (2023, M+, Hong Kong).



Educational activities:

Opening Talk (October 1)

Exhibition curator Mikel Onandia will present this exhibition.

Cover image:

Ever is Over All, 1997

Audiovisual installation (film still)

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Courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and Luhring Augustine

More information:

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Ever is Over All, 1997

Audiovisual installation (film still)

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