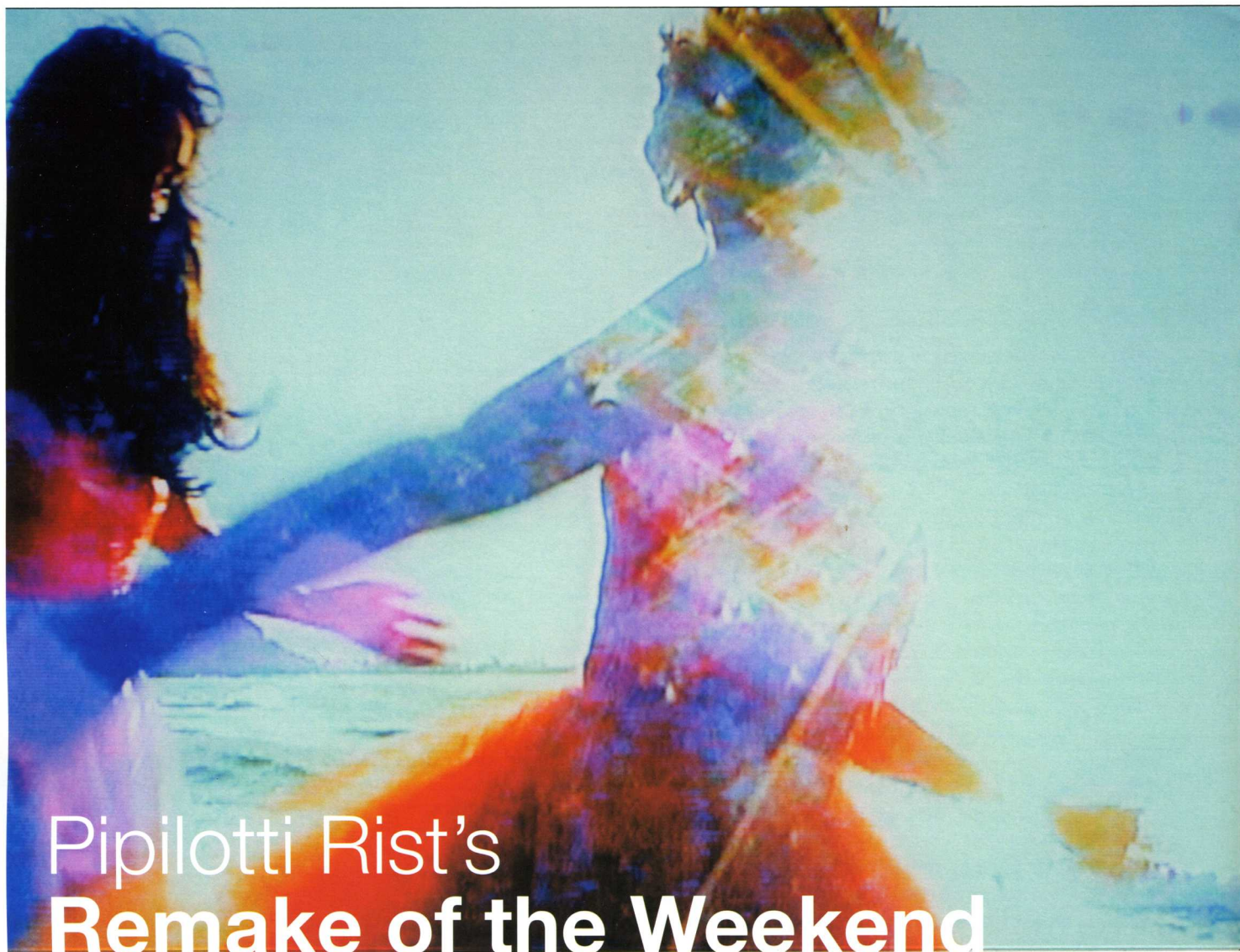


# WOMEN IN THE ARTS

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## Pipilotti Rist's Remake of the Weekend

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In contrast to her enigmatic videos, Swiss contemporary artist Pipilotti Rist (b. 1962) is direct in her answers to specific questions about her artwork. In a 1998 webzine interview for *beyond, the magazine*, the artist was asked why she titled a new piece as well as the one-person exhibition in which it premiered *Remake of the Weekend*.

*First, it's a short poem as any title should be. Second, it's a joke or persiflage to our society, which is extremely longing for or concentrated on the weekend. From Monday to Friday we lead just a second-quality life, and on the weekend everything should happen. "Remake" means to treat Monday to Friday like the weekend, to remake it. And third, it is certainly a tribute to the film Weekend by Godard, which I like very much.*

By choosing to remake Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend*, (1967) Rist provides a feminist retort to the New Wave filmmaker's hubris, which is obvious in the earlier film's final title sequence: "End of Film. End of Cinema." Born in Paris in 1930 and known primarily as a French filmmaker, Godard actually spent much of his childhood in Switzerland. Rist's *Remake* provides a subtle link to both artists' Swiss heritage as well as their experimental styles of breaking apart traditional narratives to create cinematic essays.

Godard's *Weekend* is perhaps his most extreme critique of the bourgeoisie. It presents the journey of a middle-class couple driving from Paris to the countryside to assist in the demise of the wife's father in anticipation of an inheritance. Addressing modern society's notion of the weekend, Rist's video echoes Godard's Marxist damning of the artificial two-day respite as a consequence of contemporary materialism. Along the way, Godard's couple encounters unimaginable violence, most famously in the ten-minute continuous shot of a traffic jam that features fighting drivers, burning cars, and bloodied bodies. The final scene shows the wife joining a band of cannibals and eating what seem to be her husband's remains. Rist's still of a naked running man, viewed from inside a window, can be seen as a reference to the demise of Godard's primary male character and his wife's ultimate self-empowerment by literally consuming her mate.

As carefully selected static images, the "Still Stills" from Rist's *Remake* hint at the content and appearance of her video. They are also compelling as individual photographs, and they can be viewed as a stop-action sequence that challenges the viewer to invent a new narrative. Themes prevalent throughout Rist's work are apparent, including feminism and femininity, the human body, storytelling, and personal reinvention. The red shoes in one of these stills emphasizes the femininity of many of Rist's subjects, including her heroine in *Ever Is Over All*, while also resembling the footwear of a female member of Godard's cannibalistic tribe.

The stop-action nature of the stills mirrors Rist's fractured cinematic style. She highlights the flaws and techniques inherent to video such as wipes (the transition between images in which the borders or horizontal lines move across the screen), superimposed imagery and silhouettes, and oversaturated colors and bleeds. These reflect the methods Godard employs to remind viewers that they are watching images projected from

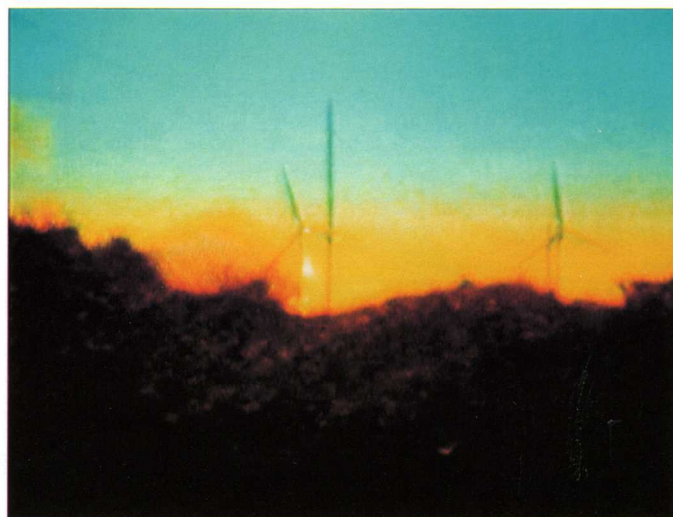
film: jump cuts in scenes, titles on the screen in the middle of the movie, and characters addressing the audience directly. When asked by Hans Ulrich Obrist about the difference between film and video, Rist responded,

*I often say that video is like a painting on glass that moves, because video also has a rough, imperfect quality that looks like painting. . . . Video has its own particular qualities, its own lousy, nervous, inner-world quality, and I work with that.*

The ease of working with video (as compared to film) allowed Rist to make her early low-budget productions that included herself as writer, director, and actor. But she's careful to clarify that her low-tech aesthetic is not created through happenstance: "My work is very concentrated imagery put into a concentrated loop," she told Jane Harris of *Art Journal*. "I don't show garbage footage. That's another style. The images in the final work that you see are carefully culled from hours and hours of footage."

Rist created *Remake of the Weekend* (1998) during a period in which she used her videos to make installations that surrounded viewers with images and sound. Like *Sip My Ocean* and *Ever Is Over All*, both from the mid-1990s, *Remake* was originally exhibited as a large-scale projection on two abutting screens. Viewers facing the angled screens saw footage from within and outside a moving bus. They were taken on a lush journey that featured vibrant color, dreamy music, and editing techniques that have become hallmarks of Rist's style.

The idea of "remaking" appears often in Rist's work. In her first single-channel video *I'm Not a Girl Who Misses Much* (1986), the artist appropriated the first line from the Beatles' song "Happiness is a Warm Gun." A blurry image of Rist manically singing and dancing with her breasts exposed over the top of her dress is first speeded up



and then slowed down. Although Rist said she hadn't seen MTV at the time she created this piece, some critics have suggested that *I'm Not a Girl* was a feminist response to the objectification of women in early music videos.

Similarly Rist has "remade" her persona numerous times throughout her career. Upon entering the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna in 1982, where she studied commercial art, photography, and illustration, Rist changed her name from Charlotte to Pipilotti, a combination of her nickname (Lotti) and the character Pippi Longstocking, the strong-willed girl featured in the 1940s stories by Astrid Lindgren. The artwork *Me as a Human Being* (2000) features 120 photographs that document Rist's changing appearance. Her looks range from bleached-blond glamour queen to androgynous suited businesswoman to dark-haired John Lennon look-alike—almost always sporting her signature brilliant red lipstick.

By the late 1990s, museum and gallery exhibitions provided Rist the opportunity to create large-scale works like *Ever Is Over All*, *Sip My Ocean*, and *Remake*, in which the projected images dissolve the two-dimensional limitations of the gallery walls. Later, in more elaborate installations such as *Himalaya Sister's Living Room* (2000), Rist projected her videos onto, among other things, a table, a lamp, and liquor bottles lined up along a 1950s-style cocktail bar in a re-created living room.

Rist readily affirms the influence of Nam June Paik (1932–2006), the Korean video artist to whom she referred as "our media grandfather who can do anything. . . . Other video artists must smother, capitulate, or bypass him through content," in the preface to *Nam June Paik: Jardin Illuminé* (Galerie Hauser & Wirth, 1993). Similarly Rist's work is indebted to artists such as Adrian Piper, Jenny Holzer, and Cindy Sherman, who in the 1980s deconstructed the objectification of women

