

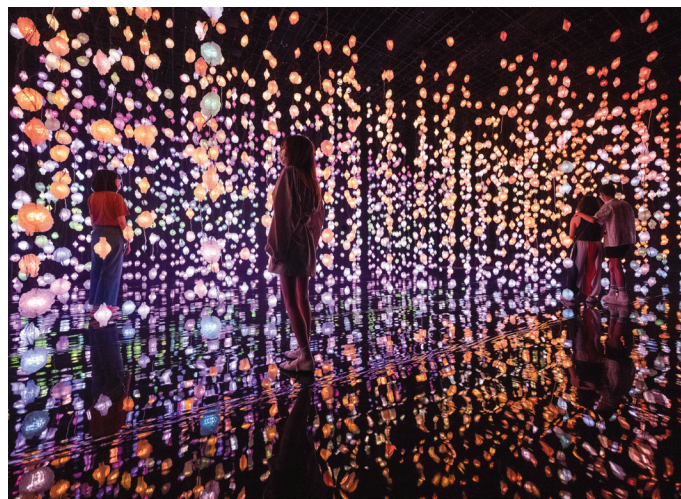
## Pipilotti Rist *Behind Your Eyelid*

“Behind Your Eyelid,” presented by Tai Kwun Contemporary, was Pipilotti Rist’s first solo exhibition in Hong Kong. Comprising more than 45 works from the Swiss media artist’s three-decade-plus career, the

show promised to be the hottest Instagram spot for the city’s summer, with the visual spectacle that one expects from a ticketed blockbuster exhibition. At the show seemingly curated for social media, one was immersed (and at times, drowned) in the colorful world of Rist, while also having access to some of her earlier experimental works.

The exhibition started on the third floor with the Hong Kong version of the photogenic *Pixel Forest* (2016–22), an installation with hundreds of lights, each embedded in translucent resin casts reminiscent of what the artist describes as “frozen labias.” These forms were strung together and suspended from the ceiling, forming a forest of clitoral lights that changed colors in rhythm with a four-track playlist. This was the first of many Instagram opportunities for friends and family alike.

In the next room, the provocatively titled two-channel video work *Sip My Ocean* (1996) was projected across the entirety of two perpendicular walls. The mirrored underwater footage shows scenes of corals, litter, and a female groin. Accompanying the video is a cover of Chris Isaak’s “Wicked Game” (1989) by the artist and her frequent collaborator Anders Guggisberg. Toward the end, Rist’s screeching of the lyrics punctuates the otherwise lulling work. The tightly shot imagery alongside the distressed singing made for an engaging, offbeat, and, at times, very intimate experience. Unlike *Pixel Forest*, *Sip My Ocean* did not feel like an artwork selected purely



Installation view of PIPILOTTI RIST’s *Pixel Forest 3rd Floor* Tai Kwun Old Bailey Road Central HK, 2016–22, hanging LED light installation, dimensions variable, at “Behind Your Eyelid,” Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong, 2022. Courtesy Tai Kwun.

for the sensory pleasure of the audience.

Another large-scale video installation was around the corner. Perhaps one of Rist’s most well-known works, *Ever is Over All* (1997) features a woman in a blue dress blissfully walking down a street, smashing car windows with a large flower, as bystanders walk by, including a police woman who nods approvingly. Beauty and destruction go hand in hand in this anarchistic utopia where women take power. The work offered a glimpse into Rist’s earlier “feminist” ideas, but it would prove to be the only one. The brochure describes *Ever is Over All* as foregrounding the “criminal power of beauty,” but the concluding sentence hints at another reason why it was included: it might (and emphasis on the “might”) have inspired the music video for Beyoncé’s “Hold Up” (2016)—a crowd pleaser for its possible pop-culture influence. Cue the “How do you do, fellow kids” meme.

Outside of *Das Zimmer* (*The Room*) (1994/2017) on the first floor, a sign warned of sensitive matter. What could the sensitive matter be? I had already been through a forest of labias and seen one in *Sip My Ocean*. Behind the curtains, two comically large red sofas faced a CRT television. A supersized wooden remote allowed visitors to change the channel, with a nearby board providing the list of ten videos

that one could select. Much to my disappointment, aside from some male nudity in *Sexy Triste Eu* (*Sexy Sad I*) (1987), the other videos were relatively mundane. *My Boy My Horse My Dog* (1997), for example, features singer Saadet Türköz in a blue ensemble singing for the entirety of the four-minute video. The mindless channel flipping on the fuzzy CRTs while sitting on the large sofas felt like a fever dream from yesteryear.

As a retrospective exhibition, “Behind Your Eyelid” showed an artist whose work has matured toward technical feats while veering away from the provocation of her earlier projects. 冬の風景 (*Winter Landscape*) (2021) is a video that painstakingly aligns with the details of the painting it is projected onto. The video transforms the painting, bringing the landscape into dusk, nighttime, and more abstract scenes with floral overlays. Similarly demonstrating the technical precision of Rist and her team, 幻彩巨膜 (*Big Skin*) (2022) features multiple cloudlike plastic “skins,” hung at various heights, with scenery videos projected onto them. Both works exemplify Rist’s more recent aesthetics-driven oeuvre.

Overall, the decidedly apolitical and visually pleasing exhibition of Pipilotti Rist made it a safe choice for drawing in the crowds.

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