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Pipilotti Rist at Luhring Augustine

With a show that opened Sept. 11, Pipilotti Rist intended this installation as an expression of healing, a slightly belated gift of visual balm for a wounded city. Happily, its effect is more complicated than that. Titled *Herbstzeitlose* (which has been translated as *Meadow Saffron* or *Fall Time Less*), it consists of a four-track video installation and a few evocative fragments of rural domesticity: a full-scale partial facade of a scallop-shingled farmhouse, some well-worn patio furniture, a wicker basket with kindling, a rush broom. Visitors pass through an eye-warming pool of red light at the gallery's entrance before entering this arena of azure rural purity.

One video, featuring floral imagery, plays on the farmhouse wall. A second, more prominent, video is of moving water reflecting a splendid sunset, shot with a

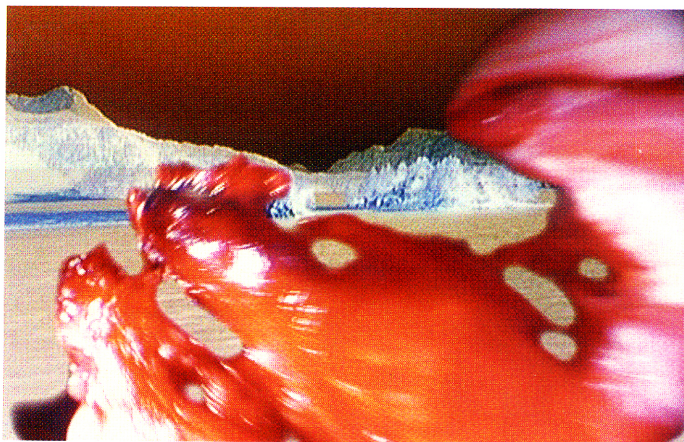
woozily moving camera so the image is doubly unsteady. This track is projected through a curtain of miscellaneous clear-plastic trash—drinking cups, CD cases, takeout clamshell containers—that throws sharp shadows on the water. The two videos that together span adjacent walls are mainly of a verdant Alpine landscape, shot near Rist's childhood home in Switzerland; a photographic frieze of a similar landscape, all sylvan serenity except for an outsize signal-transmitting tower, appears as a strip of baseboard-high scenery set up along the floor. In the paired videos, a young girl in traditional peasant finery stands in a sun-shot meadow, arms outstretched. A protean mountain goddess, she at first has black skin, then white. There is also a rustic farmer and, intermittently, a breakneck tour of a tidy Swiss town. In these videos, too, the camera never stands still, often turning a full 360 degrees so that seemingly pin-headed figures, shot from the ground up, loom monumentally, and cows float, Chagall-like, upside down in the sky. At times, water droplets on the camera's lens dapple the imagery. An original soundtrack plays throughout, mainly of anodyne music scored for guitar and strings, though there is also birdsong, childish laughter that veers between sweet and maniacal, and what sounds like an old woman, yelling. Even to a non-German-speaker, it's clear she's not

offering words of solace.

Though there are long passages that induce pure visual swoon, *Herbstzeitlose's* dizzying—indeed, violent—camerawork means to tumble us from its comfortable lawn chairs into the dark underneath of the landscape, a place that most religions have a name for. Rist has always disarmed by geniality, the better to whack our windows to smithereens (see *Ever Is Over All*, 1997) or pull us under the splintered floorboards (as in several subsequent videos installed underfoot). In two new small works also included in this show, she plunges deep into the body (*Erste Hilfe* is a metal first-aid kit with a tiny video screen

showing an endless descent into a blood-red orifice) or pulls us into a lusty little death dream (in *Grabstein für RW*, a gray, leaf-strewn tombstone has a circular cutout for a video featuring the monstrously outthrust tongue of a woman lying in the grass). In *Herbstzeitlose*, we may, similarly, have an insider's edge, but we're definitely never on top of things. It is about as soothing as a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm.

—Nancy Princenthal



Still from Pipilotti Rist's video installation *Herbstzeitlose*, 2004; at Luhring Augustine.