

# Cheryl Donegan

## Head

1993

colour video, sound

2:54 minutes

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

*Head* is one of the best-known works in video art. For its maker, Cheryl Donegan, it is akin to having a hit pop song: the work has a life of its own and everyone brings their own response to it. Like all cultural icons, though, the work also reflects its moment of production. Blocks of near-pastel colour, a soundtrack by power pop band Sugar, the artist's boyish hairstyle and Jane Fonda inspired work-out look, altogether project the style of the early 1990s. It is a mood expressive of America's MTV (Music Television), a pop music video network that started broadcasting in 1986 and that saw a rise in the popularity of music video as an accessible art form.

In a DIY spirit that included her simply playing the backing track on CD from a boom box in her studio, and relying on no post performance editing, Donegan presents a punk-ish counter punch to the usual representation of women in MTV videos. Even so, *Head* evades easy definition: Donegan's provocative performance is simultaneously a celebration of assertive female sexuality and a critique of its commodification. *Head* has an ambiguity in this regard that remains today.

Cheryl Donegan was born in 1962 in New Haven, United States of America, and works in New York. Her first career survey *My Plastic Bag* was held at the Kunsthalle Zurich in 2017. Other major solo exhibitions include GRLZ + VEILS organised by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and Aspen Art Museum in 2018. Donegan's work has been included in the Whitney Biennial of American Art, New York (1995); Venice Biennale (1993); Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon (1995); and the Semaine Internationale de la Video in Geneva (1997).