

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Hyunjee Lee, "An Iranian Artist Explores Her American Identity," *New York Magazine: The Cut*, May 21, 2017

NEW YORK

GALLERY

An Iranian Artist Explores Her American Identity

By Hyunjee Lee



Still From The Film *Roja* (2016)

© Shirin Neshat/Courtesy Shirin Neshat and Gladstone Gallery; New York and Brussels

In her new exhibition "[Shirin Neshat: Dreamers](#)," artist Shirin Neshat explores her identity as an Iranian woman in America through a film and series of photographs. Born

GLADSTONE GALLERY

in Iran and currently based in New York, Neshat conveys her conflicting emotions while navigating two countries and their different flaws. She shows that in the U.S., her background can draw prejudice because of the country's troubled relationship with the Middle East. In Iran, she grapples with the government's history of limiting freedom of expression. The exhibition addresses her fight to balance Iranian and American cultures, examining an experience that many immigrants face in defining their personal and political identities.

The film, titled *Roja*, is inspired by Neshat's recurring dreams and memories. "[It] evolves around my personal, emotional, psychological and political relations, where I feel at once attached yet alienated by both the American culture and my 'motherland,'" Neshat told the Cut. *Roja* was filmed in the U.S., but Neshat chose bare settings to evoke Middle Eastern landscapes. The photo series, titled *Dreamers*, features blurry portraits of white American men and women. According to Neshat, the lack of focus in the images reveals her true state of mind, an "inability to reach beyond a certain point about what constitutes the American image."