

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Molly Langmuir and Trish Deitch, "Elle Women in Art: Who to Know, Love, Collect," *Elle Magazine*, November 16, 2017

ELLE

ELLE WOMEN IN ART: WHO TO KNOW, LOVE, COLLECT

In our seventh annual Women in Art Issue, ELLE celebrates 11 artists, curators, museum honchos-women on a mission now more vital than ever: to investigate and illuminate the world we're living in.

The Reluctant Revolutionary: Shirin Neshat



Photographed at her Bushwick, Brooklyn, residence
with *Untitled*, from her "Women of Allah" series, 1995

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Maybe it's because Iranian-born Shirin Neshat has been more or less in exile from the country of her birth since the 1979 Islamic Revolution—when she was an international art student at UC Berkeley—that she feels compelled to cross borders between still photography, video, feature film, and, yes, opera. “I have this feeling of restlessness that I experience in my body,” she says. “I cannot feel completely at peace.”

When Neshat first returned to Iran to see her family in 1990, she found herself using art to try to understand the ways her country had changed since she'd left at 17. Back in the U.S., she rented some imposing firearms, put on a chador—the black, birdlike uniform of the postrevolution women of Iran—and asked a friend to photograph her, gun often pointed at the viewer. Atop the prints, in patterns resembling classic Iranian decorative arts, Neshat drew the poetry of female revolutionary Tahereh Saffarzadeh. The photos, part of Neshat's first solo show in 1993, questioned how women “become the battleground for men's ideology.”

“She dared to tackle issues that at the time didn't mean much to anyone,” says Spanish curator Octavio Zaya, “but are now so present in our lives. She's probably one of the most important artists to help us see the world around us in a different way.”

“I have my enemies—from art critics to the Iranian government,” says Neshat, who recently directed *Aida* at the prestigious Salzburg Festival and premiered her second feature film, *Looking for Oum Kulthum*, at the 2017 Venice Film Festival. “I hesitate to think of myself as a revolutionary. I don't want to change the world—I'd rather deal with hearts and minds.”