

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Shirin Neshat

The Fury

January 26, 2023 – March 4, 2023

Opening Reception: January 26, 6pm – 8pm

515 West 24th Street

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present *The Fury*, an exhibition of new works by Shirin Neshat. This show comprises a double-channel video installation and a series of black and white photographs with hand-drawn calligraphy of poems by Iranian poet Forough Farrokhzad. These multidimensional bodies of work continue upon her incisive artmaking practice that focuses on the female body as both a battleground for ideology and a source of strength. By questioning and drawing attention to the relationship between the masculine and feminine, the individual and the collective these highly charged images address issues of power within patriarchal societies.

In a highly fictionalized and stylized way, Neshat's new video installation addresses the sexual exploitation of female political prisoners by the Islamic Republic's regime in Iran. Subjected to severe torture, sexual assault, including rape, it is commonly known that even after being released, many of the women are unable to recover emotionally from the trauma experienced in prison, and often commit suicide. The video traces the psychological and emotional journey of a young Iranian woman, who, although now lives freely in the United States, remains traumatized by her memories in captivity. Shown alongside this video is a new photographic series that focuses more directly on the female body as both an object of desire and of violence. The nude portraits of a diverse selection of women convey a sense of beauty, dignity, confidence, and pride, yet pain, vulnerability, and trauma. Although both *The Fury* video installation and photographic series were shot in the Spring of 2022, before the current "Woman, Life, Freedom" Revolution, these new series speak the truth about the reality of Iranian men and women political prisoners who are currently kept behind bars.

For decades, Neshat's expansive body of work has focused on the problematics of the female body in Islamic cultures, specifically in relation to her country, Iran, and the way in which the female body has continued to be a contested space for sin, shame, desire, repression, politics, while also rebellion, power and protest. In her earliest photographic series *Unveiling* (1992), Neshat questioned the role of the veil in Islam. By concealing a woman's body, the veil is used as a tool to eradicate all sexual temptations from the public domain. These sensual and provocative images of Iranian women explored the subjects' emotional and psychological state of living under constant surveillance, including mandatory veiling. The images embodied a sense of submission yet disobedience, a paradox that was again further enhanced by the inscribed poetry of Forough Farrokhzad, the renowned female Iranian poet, known for the radical feminist nature of her literature.

Later, in her photographic series, *Women of Allah* (1994-1997), Neshat expanded her inquiry about the female body further as a political space in relation to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. During and in the aftermath of the Revolution, the veil became the core of the regime's identity, and women's bodies were a battleground for men's political, ideological and religious rhetoric. *Women of Allah* very specifically framed the concept of 'martyrdom' and captured images of women who became voluntarily militant in their conviction to the Islamic Revolution, and the religious fervor that flourished in Iran at the time. In these provocative and paradoxical images, the female gaze projected a sense of conviction, devotion, submission yet cruelty, and violence. *The Fury* builds upon this legacy of interrogating and spotlighting issues that impact women, both in Iran and globally.

Shirin Neshat is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in New York. In 2022, Neshat was the subject of a comprehensive installation of her photographs and video works, "Land of Dreams" at The Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto, Toronto, which travelled to SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 2019, Neshat was the subject of a retrospective exhibition, "Shirin Neshat: I Will Greet the Sun Again" at The Broad, Los Angeles, which traveled to The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. She has mounted numerous solo exhibitions at museums internationally, including: ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Copenhagen; Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland; Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, Austria; Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany; Museo Correr, Venice, Italy; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Serpentine Gallery, London; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. A major retrospective of her work was exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 2013. Neshat was awarded the Golden Lion Award, the First International Prize at the 48th Biennale di Venezia (1999), the Hiroshima Freedom Prize (2005), the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2006), and the Praemium Imperiale Prize (2017). In 2009, Neshat directed her first feature-length film, *Women Without Men*, which received the Silver Lion Award for "Best Director" at the 66th Venice International Film Festival.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Thursday-Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday, 12pm-6pm