

GLADSTONE GALLERY

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SHIRIN NESHAT

October 15 through November 12, 2005

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Shirin Neshat. Continuing to use the culture of her native Iran as inspiration, her recent films attempt to reconstruct a more universal approach to notions of identity, society, refuge, and utopia. This exhibition will include a video installation from a larger ongoing project based on the novel *Women Without Men* by Shahrnush Parsipur. Tracing the lives of different women as they struggle to escape and form a refuge of their own in the midst of the 1953 CIA-led coup in Iran, the novel's surreal yet frank depiction of female sexuality and repression led to the author's own imprisonment and exile.

The imagery that dominated Neshat's earlier work has given way to a more cinematic approach: eschewing the visual tropes of veil-covered women and white-shirted men, her new films forego neatly-parsed representations in favor of a stronger narrative course and more nuanced characterizations. Using the novel as a starting point, Neshat has adapted short films based on the five intertwined female characters. Elaborating upon the themes she has explored in both film and photography, her interpretation of the stories' magic realism blends strong visuals with the plot to create films that straddle both cinema and art. Still employing specifically articulated spaces and multi-channel screenings, Neshat's installation insists upon a visceral and emotional interaction between viewer and the plights of the characters she depicts.

Zarin, 2005, is the story of a young woman who has been working as a prostitute since childhood. The film traces her slow disintegration into psychic delirium. Wracked by both guilt for her actions and a strong desire for salvation, her madness manifests itself in her perception of the world around her. Chronicling the course of her breakdown with imagery that is both graphic and beautiful, Neshat evokes the torment of one so tortured by her subjugated role in society that she feels completely powerless. As the men Zarin encounters appear without faces, horror, shame, and guilt overwhelm her. Viewing this as her punishment from God, she flees the brothel for a bathhouse. Scrubbing her skin raw and bloody, she attempts to make amends with her past; however, she descends deeper in madness as she strives for redemption.

Shirin Neshat was born in Qazvin, Iran, but moved to the United States in 1974. She currently lives and works in New York. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Dallas Museum of Art; Wexner Center, Columbus; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Serpentine Gallery, London. She has been included in Documenta XI, the 1999 Venice Biennale, and the 2000 Whitney Biennial. This past summer she was awarded the Hiroshima Freedom Prize and will be the subject of extensive retrospectives at Museo de Arte Contemporaneo in Leon, Spain and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin this fall.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be available.

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