GLADSTONE

Shirin Neshat Debuts New Film Trilogy during 2026 Venice Biennale

Organized by Associazione Genesi and Banca Ifis, and presented by Gladstone Gallery and Lia Rumma Gallery and in collaboration with Magonza, *Do U Dare!* explores themes of displacement, isolation, protest, artistic obsession, and the line between creation and self-destruction

Shirin Neshat, *Do U Dare!*, 2025. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone, and Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan/Naples.

New York, NY (January 28, 2026 – Updated March 9, 2026)—Visual artist and filmmaker Shirin Neshat premieres a new film trilogy this May, concurrent with the 2026 edition of the Venice Biennale, curated by Ilaria Bernardi and Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, organized by Associazione Genesi (founded by Letizia Moratti in 2020) and Banca Ifis, and presented by Gladstone Gallery and Lia Rumma Gallery and in collaboration with Magonza publishing house. Inspired by Neshat's fascination with the tragic story of Nasim Aghdam, an Iranian-born media personality whose life and artistic practice resonated with Neshat, *Do U Dare!* explores one artist's gaze upon another, and the connections that emerge between them. Shot in three different socioeconomic landscapes in New York, the three films investigate the paradox between women's inner and outer worlds, reality and illusion, and American society and the Iranian female perspective. *Do U Dare!* is on view at the

Palazzo Marin from May 8 through September 6, 2026.

This trilogy was inspired by the story of Nasim Aghdam, an Iranian woman who due to her Bahá'í faith, fled to the U.S. when she was a child to escape persecution by the Iranian government. Living in suburban California, isolated and struggling to connect with American society while also losing her connection to her Iranian heritage, Aghdam built her own imaginative world online where she performed, sang, and danced in stylized videos that spoke to her longing, rage, protest and a need to be seen.

Through her videos, Aghdam mocked and ridiculed the ideological parallels between Iranian and American cultures and authoritarianism. Her performances exposed the spectacle of power, consumerism, and media-driven narcissism that dominate contemporary society. At the same time, she embodied and subverted the persistent image of women as objects of desire, and control through her provocative and unsettling videos that confronted her viewers' expectations. Her videos went viral, gathering millions of views until YouTube suddenly shut down her channel. Devastated by authoritarian censorship akin to that which her family experienced in Iran, in 2018 at the age of 38, Aghdam entered YouTube's headquarters armed, injured several people, and ultimately took her own life.

Each of the three videos in the *Do U Dare!* trilogy is a fictionalized narrative, unfolding within a distinct socioeconomic landscape of the greater New York area, forming a fragmented portrait of Nasim Aghdam's inner world:

Immigrant Displacement

Set in a low-income immigrant neighborhood of Brooklyn, this video follows Nasim as she moves through a community marked by poverty, exclusion, and quiet despair. Observing lives caught in bureaucratic indifference and cultural alienation, she bears witness to the cruelty beneath the American promise of opportunity. Her quiet defiance grows into mounting fury, culminating in an unexpected and radical act of protest, revenge, and a desperate need to be heard.

Stardom and the Fantasy of Visibility

Filmed in the corporate core of Wall Street, the second video places Nasim amid a dense, buzzing financial district where men and women move mechanically through their routines, emotionally vacant and disconnected. As night falls, the same soulless crowd becomes mysteriously drawn toward a disembodied musical voice. Following the pull of the sound, Nasim discovers herself at its center—transformed into a performer who commands the crowd, moving them to tears.

This chapter explores Nasim's obsession with fame, recognition, and public validation. Stardom and artistic ingenuity emerge as seductive forces—a compulsive longing to be seen, admired, and acknowledged, driven by the belief that visibility itself might confer power, relevance, and meaning.

Artist at Her Studio

The final video unfolds inside Nasim's suburban home, where she secretly produces her own videos inspired by her encounters with the outside world and the media. She repeatedly performs and impersonates a series of characters—singing, dancing, and slipping between personas as a form of satire. Through these performances she ridicules America's self-image as a global superpower,

exposing the contradictions that underpin it: political hypocrisy, systemic racism, and the enduring structures of injustice that contradict the nation's rhetoric of freedom and democracy. Her performances also point to the grotesque disparity between extreme wealth and celebrity culture on one hand, and the persistent realities of poverty, violence, and global destruction on the other.

Central to this chapter is also the sexual objectification of women within American visual culture, exposing the paradox of the female body in contemporary media, how it is endlessly aestheticized, and fetishized as a symbol of beauty and desirability, yet at the same time relentlessly commodified, surveilled, and consumed.

Similar to Neshat's previous work, in *Do U Dare!* the three films build from black and white social realism into a realm of magic and surrealism, illustrating Aghdam's fragile mental state, her emotional instability through exile and displacement, her ultimate inability to distinguish between imagination and reality, and her obsession with impersonating others—experiences that resonate with many immigrants in their attempt at assimilation and belonging in America.

Through this intricate interplay between truth and fiction, past and present, *Do U Dare!* acts as both mirror and dialogue, a meditation on exile, loneliness, artistic obsession, and the fragile boundary between creation and self-destruction. The film questions not only the lengths to which an artist will go to be seen, belong, and reclaim her voice, but also the human cost of displacement and the redemptive power of art.

A monographic volume will be published by Magonza publishing house and will include texts by curators Ilaria Bernardi and Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, as well as an essay by Giovanni Curatola, an internationally renowned academic and expert in Islamic art. Rather than simply documenting the exhibition, the volume aims to be an independent exploration of Shirin Neshat's work.

About Shirin Neshat
Shirin Neshat is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in New York. Neshat works with the mediums of photography, video, film, and Opera, which she imbues with highly poetic and politically charged images and narratives that question issues of power, religion, race, gender and the relationship between the past and present, individual and collective through the lens of her personal experiences as an Iranian woman living in exile.

Neshat has held numerous solo exhibitions at museums internationally including the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; The Broad, Los Angeles; Museo Correr, Venice, Italy; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.; the Detroit Institute of Arts; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; the Serpentine Gallery, London, England; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany; and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Canada.

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.

Neshat directed her first opera Verdi's *Aida* at the Salzburg Festival in 2017 and 2022, which was restaged at the Paris Opera House in 2025. She is currently directing Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, at the Teatro Regio in Parma, which will premiere on January 23rd, 2026.

About Associazione Genesi
Founded in 2020 in Milan at the behest of Letizia Moratti, Associazione Genesi is committed to the defense of human rights through contemporary art, with the aim to contribute to the creation of a more responsible and socially active citizenry.

For this reason, Associazione Genesi created Collezione Genesi, comprising artworks by artists from around the world and from different generations that reflect on the urgent, complex, and at times dramatic cultural, environmental, social, and political issues of today.

Since 2021 Associazione Genesi has organized contemporary art exhibitions on themes related to human rights (including *Progetto Genesi*, 2021-2024), hosted in important exhibition spaces in Italy and abroad, such as the Palais des Nations at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) in Geneva, Switzerland; the Triennale Milano in Milan, Italy; Villa Panza in Varese, Italy; and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy.

Since 2025 Associazione Genesi has become a true traveling museum of contemporary art through a program of solo and group shows, related to today's most pressing social issues.

Associazione Genesi is composed by Letizia Moratti (President), Gabriele Moratti (Vice-President), Angelo Moratti, Francesca and Gilda Moratti (Councilors), and Ilaria Bernardi (Curator of exhibitions). associazionegenesi.it

About Banca Ifis
Promoting and enhancing Italian culture and its social impact is one of Banca Ifis' key areas of commitment, expressed through *Ifis art*, the initiative conceived by Chairman Ernesto Fürstenberg Fassio to bring together all the Bank's projects in the fields of art and culture. Among these, the most significant is the creation of the Banca Ifis International Sculpture Park, launched in 2023 to celebrate the Bank's 40th anniversary, based on an idea by Chairman Ernesto Fürstenberg Fassio. The International Sculpture Park extends across 22 hectares of gardens at Villa Fürstenberg in Mestre and hosts 26 works by 16 leading masters of contemporary sculpture, both Italian and international: Fernando Botero, Annie Morris, Park Eun Sun, Igor Mitoraj, Manolo Valdés, Pablo Atchugarry, Pietro Consagra, Roberto Barni, Julio Larraz, Philip Colbert, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Nico Vascellari, Davide Rivalta, Tony Cragg, and Anselm Kiefer. The park is open to the public free of charge, with visits bookable via the *Ifis art* app, and stands as an international case study in corporate collections and cultural and social responsibility. bancaifis.it

About Gladstone Gallery
Gladstone Gallery is recognized for its embrace of experimentation and visionary practices. The gallery has long been an active partner with artists pursuing catalytic ideas and engaging with pressing issues. Headquartered in New York, Gladstone's impact extends globally with galleries in Brussels and Seoul, enabling it to present new bodies of work and evolve its program to advance the practices and reach of its artists through time. Alongside its work with contemporary artists, the gallery is a steward of the legacies of pivotal historical artists and an advocate for the enduring power

of their work. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone. gladstonegallery.com

About Lia Rumma Gallery
Lia Rumma Gallery was founded in Naples in 1971 by Lia Rumma, following her and her husband Marcello's support of the Arte Povera movement throughout the 1960s. For over five decades, the Gallery has embodied a pioneering vision in presenting a new generation of artists. Shaped by intellectual independence, cultural rigor, and a strong commitment to artists, it has developed a program centered on long-term collaborations and the production of exhibitions and museum-scale projects in dialogue with major international institutions in Italy and abroad. Operating between Naples and Milan, the Gallery comprises two landmark exhibition spaces dedicated to solo exhibitions, site-specific commissions, and ambitious curatorial initiatives. The Gallery has also promoted and realized several permanent installations in Italy and, through exhibitions, publications, and sustained institutional partnerships, continues to play a decisive role in contemporary art discourse with an independent, uncompromising and research-driven vision. liarumma.com

About Magonza
Specialised in contemporary art, Magonza produces exhibition and curatorial projects, exhibition catalogues, non-fiction volumes, monographs, books and artist's prints. It oversees every stage of the publishing process, from the initial concept to the development of the project and its realisation and distribution, working alongside the institutions involved, artists and authors. Editing and translation are combined with creativity, typographical experimentation and constant research. Magonza has published many essays written by international critics and art historians.

Among our Italian and international museum collaborations, we include editorial and curatorial projects carried out in conjunction with FAI Villa e Collezione Panza, Varese; The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany; Musei Civici di Venezia (Palazzo Ducale, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Museo Correr and Museo del Vetro, Venice); Fondation Hartung-Bergman, Antibes; British Council, London; Fondation Bemberg, Toulouse; Università Ca' Foscari, Venice; Università La Statale, Milan; Cittàdellarte. Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella; CIMA, New York; Magazzino Italian Art, New York; Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona; Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; Phillips Collection, Washington; Yale University Press, New Haven.

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