

## *Do U Dare!*

Shirin Neshat

**Opening Saturday 17 May 2025, 4 - 8 pm**

**Galleria Lia Rumma | Via Stilicone 19 | MILAN**

**Gallery opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11.00 am -1.30 pm / 2.30 – 7.00 pm**

*Do U Dare!* is a provocative new exhibition by artist Shirin Neshat, blending a haunting video installation and striking photographic works to interrogate the commodification of identity, the rise of authoritarianism, and the fragile line between self and spectacle.

At the core of the exhibition lies Neshat's immersive video installation, *Do U Dare!*. The film follows Nasim, a young Iranian woman as she wanders through the heart of New York City's immigrant enclaves. Amid the cacophony of rushing trains and weary gazes of strangers, Nasim is drawn into a labyrinth of layered realities. Monitors plastered with the image of a suited politician—an omnipresent media figure—loom over her journey, culminating in a town square where Nasim encounters the man in person delivering hollow rhetoric to a crowd of vacant-faced immigrants. Nasim watches in disbelief.

Nasim's odyssey crescendos in a surreal wig shop, transformed into a stage of frozen humanity. Rows of mannequins—diverse in color and origin, yet uniform in their lifeless perfection—mirror the fragmentation of identity under systems of control. Here, Neshat's lens lingers on the eerie slippage between doll and human: a subtle blink, a silent breath, then dismantled, mutilated, and broken figures, a quiet glimpse at a subaltern world we all recognize but dare not face. Amid the carnage, Nasim encounters her mirrored double—a porcelain replica bearing her scars. This silent encounter sparks a quiet rebellion. In a rupture of agency, Nasim merges with her double and decides to dismantle the oppressive "medium" that enslaves them, echoing Marshall McLuhan's axiom: "The medium is the message."

Complementing the film are Neshat's arresting photographic works, which render human subjects as delicate porcelain dolls. Cracked glazes and ghostly expressions invite viewers to confront unsettling questions: How much of our identities are molded by unseen forces? Can autonomy survive in a world where lives are packaged and shelved?

"Nasim's journey is a metaphor for the awakening we all must confront," says Neshat. "In a time of political theater and curated identities, *Do U Dare!* asks not for loud rebellion, but for the courage to see—and shatter—the illusions that bind us."

**Shirin Neshat** is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in New York. Neshat works and continues to experiment 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, East and West, 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; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; The Broad, Los Angeles; Museo Correr, Venice, Italy; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C. and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Neshat has directed three feature-length films, *Women Without Men* (2009), which received the Silver Lion Award for Best Director at the 66th Venice International Film Festival, *Looking For Oum Kulthum* (2017), and most recently *Land of Dreams*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival (2021). Neshat directed her first opera Verdi's *Aida* at the Salzburg Festival in 2017 and 2022, which will be restaged at the Paris Opera House in 2025. 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 in 2017, she received the prestigious Praemium Imperiale Award in Tokyo. Currently on at PAC - Padiglione Arte Contemporanea in Milan is the artist's first major retrospective in Italy until June 8th 2025.

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