

## Shirin Neshat dreams big for first solo show in Africa

The Iranian-born artist is premiering two new videos at Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg this week



Shirin Neshat, still from Sarah, 2016. Courtesy Goodman Gallery

“For a long time, I had this obsession with dreams”, the Iranian-born artist Shirin Neshat told The Art Newspaper ahead of her first solo show in Africa opening this week at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg. Neshat is presenting two new videos there, part of a magic-realism trilogy entitled Dreamers (20 August-14 September 2016). “In all the videos, the female protagonist is in-between the boundary of dreams and reality—there are references to reality but nothing really makes sense.”

The first instalment of the trilogy, *Illusions & Mirrors* (2013), was shown at La Biennale de Montréal in 2014. The black-and-white video, starring Natalie Portman and commissioned by the fashion label Dior, was influenced by the avant-garde films of Jean Cocteau and Maya Deren. Set on a windswept beach, it depicts Portman unsuccessfully chasing a shadow, representing a woman facing her ego and nightmares, Neshat said.



Shirin Neshat, still from *Roja*, 2016. Courtesy Goodman Gallery

In the new videos, more socio-political themes come forward. *Roja* (2016) stars an Iranian friend of Neshat's rather than a famous face, and centres on the theme of "nostalgia, displacement and being torn between Western and Middle Eastern culture", the artist said. The protagonist is first shown in America surrounded by people and then she finds herself alone in the middle of the desert. "It's about longing for the motherland", Neshat added. *Sarah* (2016) takes place in a forest that's been ravaged by war. It shows a woman walking amid the destruction, who is unsure if she's alive herself, Neshat explained.

The artist approached the cinematography for the new videos in a more experimental way and put a sheet of glass over the camera lens to create blurred images that "form a different perspective that is haunting but also very beautiful".

The new videos are scheduled to travel to the Gladstone Gallery in New York in 2017, and then to the Dirimart gallery in Istanbul.