

**Shirin Neshat,
artist,**

“In Iran we read a lot of poetry and literature from a young age. It’s part of our daily existence – our families would recite poetry and Forough Farrokhzad was one of those household names. She was so radical because she wrote about sexual temptation, sin, talking to God – it was sacrilegious. People called her a whore and a lot of male poets at the time really despised her. She broke every taboo and created this cocoon where she was untouchable, and within that cocoon she lived until she died, aged 32



[in 1967]. My first show included photos of women with her poetry inscribed on their bodies. And the work I’m doing now – about sexual assault on women in prison, which feels ironic considering what has been unraveling in Iran – is returning to this kind of imagery. There is no one better than Forough when it comes to targeting the issue of the female body both as an object of desire and as an object of violence and shame.”

‘Shirin’ means sweet in Persian, and while Shirin Neshat is quietly elegant and speaks in soothing tones, she is bold and unafraid in her work. A resilient feminist and progressive storyteller, the Iran-born, New York-based artist and filmmaker draws on her experience as a woman in exile caught in the ideological rift between the West and the Middle East. Her dreamlike, monochromatic works have garnered global critical acclaim (awards include the Silver Lion at the 66th Venice Film Festival), and through them she has chronicled pivotal moments in Iran’s modern history in relation to women, capturing their brave resolution, which is evocative of today’s heroic protestors: “I am a part of this movement and I’ve got a responsibility to do what I can.”

on Forough Farrokhzad

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Photography FUMI NAGASAKA

Shirin is wearing her own clothing and accessories

Make-up: Ingeborg using CHANEL. Photographic assistant: Victoria Loeb. Scanning: Borough Photo