

Global Contemporary

*Rebellious Silence*, from the Women of Allah series. Shirin Neshat (artist); photo by Cynthia Preston. 1994 C.E. Ink on photograph.

To see the image, try this link. http://signsjournal.org/shirin-neshat/

*“In 1993-97, I produced my first body of work, a series of stark black-and-white photographs entitled Women of Allah, conceptual narratives on the subject of female warriors during the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. On each photograph, I inscribed calligraphic Farsi text on the female body (eyes, face, hands, feet, and chest); the text is poetry by contemporary Iranian women poets who had written on the subject of martyrdom and the role of women in the Revolution. As the artist, I took on the role of performer, posing for the photographs. These photographs became iconic portraits of willfully armed Muslim women. Yet every image, every women’s submissive gaze, suggests a far more complex and paradoxical reality behind the surface.” (Signs)*

 Shirin Neshat is a photographer and a film director who works in the United States. However, her artwork reflects the Islamic society, primarily in Iran, where she was born. Her focus lies on the Islamic culture and tradition, especially on women in Islamic culture. Due to her explicit attacks on sexual, political, and religious issues in Iran, she cannot work in her birth nation. She questions the position of women in Islamic culture and the fight between the tradition and the revolution (Jsimster).

 In *Rebellious Silence*, the artist, covered in a chador, is photographed holding a gun. Her face is covered with writing. The woman looks as if she’s ready to fight. She looks determined, staring straight at the camera. The origin of the musket is unclear, but its presence implies that she is going to war, ready to fight.

 The images are portraits of women that are overlaid by Persian calligraphy and they refer to the contrast she experienced between the traditional society she was raised in and the modern society evolving after the Iranian Revolution. In her art, she resists stereotypes – of both women and representations of Islam. Instead, her works explores all the complex social forces shaping Muslim women’s identity. Many of her photographs are actually mixed-media pieces of silver gelatin with ink. The calligraphy is Persian poetry about themes such as exile, identity, femininity and martyrdom. Neshat’s work revolves around concept, and she feels that photography works best with her topics, conveying realism, immediacy, and a sense of drama. (Teacherartwiki.com)

 Neshat’s works depict women in the Iran-Iraq War, responding to the violent war at that time. Although her works are based on women’s position during the war, her feminist actions also imply that these women are ready to fight for their right in the conservative world of Islam. Neshat, like previous artists, raises the question of who the war is fought for. The woman in the picture raises the question of what she’s fighting for—is it for herself or for the benefits of others? (Teacherartwiki.com)

Citation:

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"V for Victory." : Rebellious Silence, Shirin Neshat (1994). Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

<http://jsimster.blogspot.com/2011/05/rebellious-silence-shirin-neshat-1994\_13.html>.

"Shirin Neshat, Women of Allah Series." Teachartwiki -. Web. 30 Apr. 2015. <https://teachartwiki.wikispaces.com/Shirin Neshat, Women of Allah Series>.