



Shirin Neshat & Sarah Brahim
Cartographies of Presence

6 September - 4 October 2025

Albion Jeune is pleased to present Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, Iran) and Sarah Brahim (b.1992, Riyadh) in *Cartographies of Presence*. The exhibition is a dialogue between two visionary artists, whose practices traverse performance, film, photography, and poetry to explore the intersection of the personal and political. Although rooted in different geographies and generations, Brahim and Neshat's practices converge in their exploration of the body—not merely as a vessel, but as a language of memory, ritual, and defiance. Showcasing one of Neshat's most iconic films, *Passage* (2001), alongside Brahim's newly commissioned film and photography, *In Search of an Honest Map* (2025) and *There Will Come Soft Rains* (2025), the presentation focuses on how the language of the body and ritual can be used to voice metamorphosis, the unseen form, and the politics of belonging.

Neshat, winner of the 1999 Golden Lion Award, left Iran to study art in Los Angeles in 1974, just prior to the Iran Islamic Revolution, and did not return until 1990. Neshat confronts the external gaze—her subjects navigating the contradictions of visibility and silence, often bearing calligraphy as both burden and voice. By contrast, Brahim's choreographic vocabulary is informed by phenomenological thought and ritual practice. Her work suggests the possibility of internal transformation through presence and repetition. In bringing their practices into conversation, this exhibition reflects on the physical and spiritual power of the woman in Islamic culture. By questioning sexual politics and belonging, the artists reveal something of the collective condition, its rituals, conflicts, and emotions. Both artists use the body as a site of resistance, not in loud confrontation, but in sustained, poetic expression that bridges solitude and solidarity. The body is presented as both archive and altar, its movement a form of prayer, protest, and healing.

In the three-part narrative of *Passage*, a group of men carry a body wrapped in white cloth across a beach; in the distance, a group of women veiled in black chadors dig a grave with their hands, while a child arranges a circle of stones. These minimal, enigmatic scenes, set to a haunting score by Philip Glass, were filmed in the Moroccan coastal town of Essaouira. The location, where Neshat has worked before, is similar in character to the landscape of her native Iran; a place the artist is increasingly uneasy about returning. *Passage* reveals the powerful relationship between people and place; showcasing collective mourning, suffering, and tradition attached to certain psychogeographies.

In *In Search of an Honest Map* and *There Will Come Soft Rains*, premiering in London for the first time, Brahim similarly seeks a radical perspective on the cycles and circles of life—a gesture of reclamation and introspection in a world that often leaves one feeling disconnected and depleted. In *In Search of an Honest Map*, Brahim turns to her native Saudi Arabian desert as a site of escape, and as a collaborator of presence—she walks across the vast canvas in searing forty-five-degree heat with intention, trailing her feet to create an indexical mark in the sand. She lies within the marks she has drawn, fashioning her own refuge—at once an act of resistance, and reclamation. Her choreographic vocabulary is informed by phenomenological thought and ritual practice. Her work suggests the possibility of internal transformation through presence and repetition. The performance does not impose itself on the landscape—it emerges from an act of listening; listening not only to the environment, but to the body and to inhabited memory. Rather than positioning the body as separate from space, Brahim's work dwells within it, creating meaning and dialogue through movement. In this way, her performance becomes a cartography of the present—mapping not history, but presence itself. *There Will Come Soft Rains* presents the continual research and investigation of the artist's relationship to the landscape. Filmed in the early hours of the morning in Al Ula on the Harrat Hills, Brahim's practice—after years of returning to this terrain—is not to choreograph in the conventional sense but allows the wind to become visible through the body. The text written by the artist offers insight into her ongoing writing and teaching practice, which invites audiences into their own bodies through tasks and somatic descriptions.

Passage, *In Search of an Honest Map*, and *There Will Come Soft Rains* delineate the artists' shared investigation into how grief, faith, and the land are manifested and presented through collective imagination.

Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, Iran) is an Iranian-born artist and filmmaker living in exile in America. She has spent her career examining what it means to exist between two cultures, focusing on human resilience in the face of upheaval and oppression. Born outside of Tehran, Neshat moved to California for her studies in the 1970s. When the Islamic Revolution erupted in Iran in 1979, she was unable to return to her home and family for many years. A brief visit in the 1990s, where she witnessed the impact of rigid Islamic law on Iranian women, marked the beginning of Neshat's thirty-year engagement with themes of female empowerment, political resistance, and displacement and belonging. Drawing on the emotional impact of poetry and music, her highly stylized photographs and narrative time-based works explore the turbulent social conditions of life in Iran and, more recently, America. Neshat's earliest works were photographs, such as the *Unveiling* (1993) and *Women of Allah* (1993–97) series, which explore notions of femininity in relation to Islamic fundamentalism and militancy in her home country. Her subsequent video works departed dramatically from overtly political content or critique, in favour of more poetic imagery and narratives. Her first video installations—the trilogy comprising *Turbulent* (1998), *Rapture* (1999), and *Fervor* (2000)—utilise dual video screens to portray abstract oppositions based around gender and society, the individual and the group. While these works hint at the restrictive nature of Islamic laws regarding women, they deliberately open onto multiple readings, reaching instead toward universal conditions.

Neshat has mounted numerous solo exhibitions at museums internationally, including: the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Serpentine Gallery, London; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Recent solo exhibitions include: Kunstraum Dornbirn, Austria; Faurschou Foundation, Copenhagen; Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany; and Museo Correr, Venice, Italy, which was an official corollary event to the 57th Biennale di Venezia in 2017. A major retrospective of her work was exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 2013. Neshat was awarded the Golden Lion Award, the First International Prize at the 48th Biennale di Venezia (1999), the Hiroshima Freedom Prize (2005), and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2006). 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. Dreamers marked her first solo show on the African continent, which exhibited at Goodman Gallery Johannesburg in 2016. That same year, Neshat featured in the *New Revolutions: Goodman Gallery at 50* exhibitions in Johannesburg and in the *summers* group exhibition at Goodman Gallery Cape Town. In 2017, Neshat was awarded the prestigious Praemium Imperiale award for Painting. That same year, Neshat directed Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* at the Salzburg. The Broad Museum in Los Angeles recently hosted a survey exhibition of the last 25 years of Neshat's work, which travelled on to Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth in 2021. This year Neshat was the feature artist and Master of Photography at Photo London festival which took place in Somerset House in September.

Sarah Brahim (b.1992, Riyadh) is a visual and performance artist working across many mediums to present work rooted in experiences of the body. She trained as a professional performer, teacher, and choreographer at San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and received a BFA (Hons) from London Contemporary Dance School. Her research-based practice began while studying medicine at university, as she continued practicing and performing. The pursuit to understand the body through every possible lens - biological, physiological, experiential, and more - led her to receive her BS from Oregon Health and Science University, with a focus on medical anthropology, naturopathic medicine, and public health. In her work, Brahim examines how gestures of the body create a language that can be used to voice grief, metamorphosis, the unseen form, and our relationship to the natural world. Transformation through movement is reflected in her works that explore questions of embodiment and cycles of connection, whether social, spatial, or spiritual.

Sarah Brahim's work has been presented at the AIUla Arts Festival, AIUla (2025); The Grand Palais, Paris (2025); MOMI New York Arab Festival, New York (2024); The Venice Biennale, Venice (2024); Locarno Film Festival, Film Makers Academy, Locarno (2024); Paco Imperial, Rio de Janeiro (2024); Louvre Abu Dhabi for the Richard Mille Art Prize, Abu Dhabi (2024); the Islamic Biennale, Jeddah (2023); the Biennale de Lyon, Lyon (2022); the Diriyah Biennale, Diriyah (2022). In 2023, she was in residence at Robert Wilson's Watermill Center in New York and received the Baroness Nina von Maltzahn Fellowship for the Performing Arts. Her first international solo exhibition *Sometimes We Are Eternal* was presented at Bally Foundation in Lugano, Switzerland (2023-2024). Most recently, Brahim was awarded the 2025-2026 Pina Bausch Foundation Fellowship, also having received the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by French Ambassador Ludovic Pouille on behalf of the French Republic and President Emmanuel Macron in 2024.

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