

Carmignac Gestion winner talks to BJP

Newsha Tavakolian, recipient of the 5th Carmignac Gestion Photojournalism Award, discusses her winning work

Gemma Padley – 30 July 2014



A portrait of Somayyeh, a 32-year old divorced teacher © Newsha Tavakolian for the Carmignac Foundation

Tavakolian, who was born in Tehran in 1981, was awarded the €50,000 prize for her report on Iran's lost generation – young people who are caught between an increasingly modern society, and religious and cultural traditions of old.

The Award, which was founded by the Carmignac Foundation in 2009, has a different theme each year. For the 5th edition, photographers were asked to submit portfolios about Iran.

The aim of the Award is to support and promote photography of lesser known areas of conflict, by providing funding to a photographer to produce an in-depth photographic report.

Past winners include Panos Pictures photographer Robin Hammond, who won in 2012 for his work about life in Zimbabwe under the rule of Robert Mugabe, and Italian photographer Davide Monteleone, who won last year's edition for his work in Chechnya. Monteleone's resulting body of work, *Spasibo*, will be on show at the Saatchi Gallery in London from 11 October to 9 November.

Tavakolian, who began shooting professionally at the age of 16, has been published in *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, and *National Geographic* among others.

Her winning work will be exhibited in Paris, at the Chapelle des Beaux-Arts, from 7 November to 7 December 2014. The exhibition will also tour to London, Frankfurt and Milan. A book will be published to coincide with the exhibition.

BJP: What does winning this award mean to you?

NT: The Carmignac Gestion Photojournalism Award has given me the freedom, time and resources to dig deeper into a subject I feel passionately about. It was the first time I'd applied for the Award. I was travelling with a commission from the Qatar Foundation when I found out I'd won. It was very exciting.

BJP: In a few sentences, could you explain what your winning project is about?

NT: My work on Iran is about the middle class youth. I always wanted to talk about and portray these people in my photography because I felt it was important to tell their stories. The middle class is an important part of society but their stories are often forgotten or not mentioned. The focus always seems to be either on the upper class and the privileged, or on the impoverished and lower class in society. I wanted to bring their lives to the forefront and to share them with the world. In the project, I focus on eight people who I talked to about their lives, and photographed. I don't tend to plan my projects, and instead go with my heart.

BJP: What are the biggest challenges you've faced as a photographer to date, and how have you overcome them?

NT: Working in Iran – trying to tell a story in a country with many cultural and also official restrictions – is a challenge in itself. There is of course an even more important challenge than the one posed by where I geographically work: the world is flooded with images each day, so how do you make sure your work is seen and has staying power? There is no manual for that. I use all sorts of media, which I tailor for each project. Sometimes I add video or sound, but every project requires a different process. Finding a way to say what I want to say depends on the subject. For my next project I intend to portray Iran through landscape photography.

The 6th Carmignac Gestion Photojournalism Award is open for entries. This year's theme is 'lawless areas in France.'

For more information and to enter, visit: www.fondation-carmignac.com

Deadline for submissions: 28 September 2014

www.newshatavakolian.com