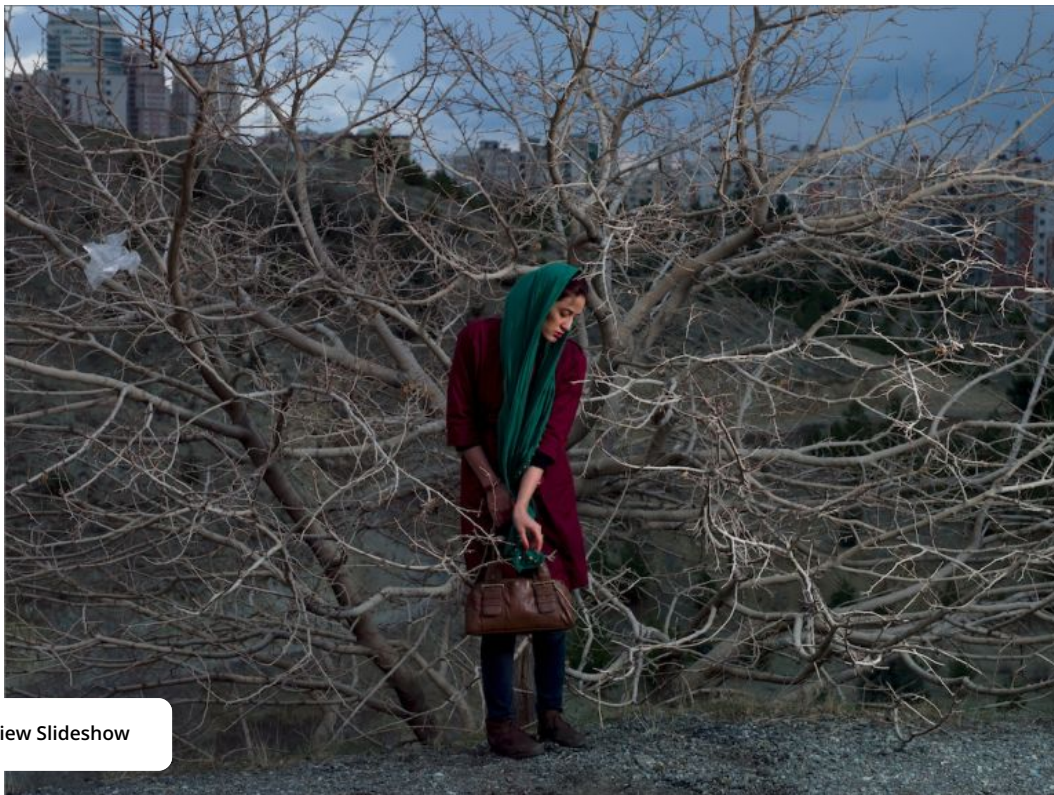


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# Newsha Tavakolian Shows Carmignac Photojournalism Award Exhibition in Paris

BY RACHEL WILL | MAY 12, 2015



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

As the fifth recipient of the prestigious Carmignac Photojournalism Award, internationally published and widely acclaimed photographer Newsha Tavakolian is showing her resulting project as an exhibition May 13-June 7 at the Chapelle des Beaux-Arts de Paris. Titled “Blank

Pages of an Iranian Photo Album,” the show is curated by Anahita Ghabaian, the president of the 2013 Carmignac jury. Tavakolian is also presenting a video installation at the Venice Biennale as part of the collective exhibition “Iran, The Great Game,” created during her project for the award.

Tavakolian’s reportage for the award centers on the feeling of “claustrophobia” inherent to the younger generation in Iran. Using the theme of a family photo album, her photos detail “young middle-class people caught between the contradictory pressures of an increasingly modern society and an Islamic revolutionary ideology,” according to the Carmignac award.



No stranger to conflict, Tavakolian started recording life in her home country of Iran at the age of 16. By age 18 she was the youngest photographer to cover Iran’s violent student uprising. She has since gone on to cover war zones, natural disaster, and create social documentaries around the world.

The Carmignac Photojournalism Award is unique in that it carries a specific

geographical focus, changing annually, and funds an emerging photographer to visit areas facing geostrategic conflicts. The award aims to highlight the work of a photographer focused in an area where human rights and freedom of speech are violated, like Tavakolian's native Iran.



To learn more about Tavakolian’s background and photographic concentrations, BLOUIN ARTINFO got in touch with the photojournalist and asked a few questions.

### **How has your photography practice evolved over the course of your career?**

I started photography when I was 16 working for a local newspaper. I covered everything from social events, news to protests. When I was 21 I started working internationally through Polaris images in NYC. I covered the Iraq war, and a range of events throughout the Middle East. After 2009's protests in Iran it became complicated to work on the streets and after some months I decided to start working on a project very close to documentary but combining features of staged and art photography. Since then I have evolved in this genre while also continuing photojournalism for international outlets like Time and the New York Times, most recently reporting from Syria and a multimedia on stress and hope (sanctions) in Tehran.

### **What initially sparked your interest in photography?**

Photography for me as a young woman in Iran was to become independent and make my own money. It wasn't without problems in a conservative society but it was worth it. As I evolved I started to understand what a powerful tool for storytelling photography is. Now I use it as a way to get deep into the soul of people, tell their stories.

**You have said your work aims to capture the feeling of claustrophobia experienced by the younger generation in Iran. Can you elaborate on this?**

In my artists statement I explain my work partly aims to show the fact that the glass ceiling in Iran is very low; that means that many people have potential but they fail to realize this. Outsiders, the media abroad, tends to blame politics for all of this, but to me the fact that many youths have trouble with realizing their goals points at much more wider issues that are also cultural and historic. What I am trying to show is the feeling of lives being stuck.

**Your work focuses on the younger generation in Iran, why have you made this distinction in your photography?**

I work on many subjects across the world, but in Iran I find the responsibility is greater from me to tell a story. For this project I have focused on the invisible middle classes, which are vast, but unknown in the west and inside Iran because both western media and the Iranian state have monopolized the vision of our society, either pro-western or hardline. I have a different view and have tried to portray those visually not attractive.

**How do both Iranian and international audiences react to your work and how is their reaction similar or different?**

It is always surprising and you never know how people will react, but I am not in this for the reactions of people I just try follow my instinct.

**Why did you decide to use the medium of a video installation for the Venice Biennale?**

It is not the first time I have used video it adds to the over project and video give the possibility to show emotions.

**You have often worked in conflict zones, what is your advice to photographers hoping to cover conflict?**

I do not consider myself a war photographer but I often work in a region filled with conflict. My advice would be to go in the other direction of the pack and work slow.

**What are your plans for the future, will you continue to focus on the same subjects?**

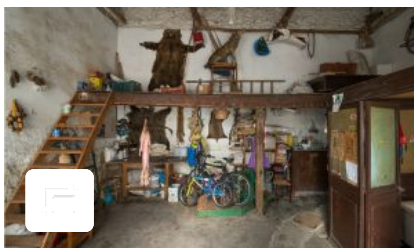
I am currently working on a project involving landscapes for the New York Times.

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