

# Ali Tahayori wins Smith & Singer People's Choice Award for Sisterhood

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The MGA Foundation and Smith & Singer are delighted to announce that Ali Tahayori has been awarded the 2021 Smith & Singer People's Choice Award for his work *Sisterhood* (2021).

"We warmly congratulate Ali Tahayori on receiving the Smith & Singer People's Choice Award for the 2021 Bowness Photography Prize," said Geoffrey Smith, Smith & Singer Chairman.

"*Sisterhood* is a striking image that is simultaneously engaging and perplexing, literally challenging the viewer to question preconceived notions of identity and belonging."

"An image whose source is from an album of family photographs, 'Sisterhood' magnificently transcends this genre to assume a complex and startling presence that haunts the viewer in its meaning and technical virtuosity," said Mr Smith.

Smith & Singer (previously Sotheby's Australia) became the proud sponsor of the People's Choice Award in 2018. Smith & Singer is Australia's premium fine art dealership facilitating the purchase and sale of important historical, modern and contemporary Australian and international art.

Their significant philanthropic support of the Bowness Photography Prize reflects the national and historic importance of this prize and the MGA Foundation is profoundly grateful. The Smith & Singer People's Choice Award was voted by the public during the

exhibition period with the recipient receiving \$5,000 to support their practice.

Over the last 16 years, the William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize has emerged as an important annual survey of contemporary photographic practice in Australia and one of the most prestigious prizes in the country. In 2005 the MGA Foundation was established with the aim of supporting MGA and its significant collection.

The MGA Foundation recognised the importance of providing a platform for contemporary Australian photographers to showcase their work, which would simultaneously raise the profile of MGA and its unique commitment to photographic art.

The following year the MGA Foundation launched the inaugural William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize to promote excellence in photography across all photographic media and stylistic genres by both established and emerging artists with work produced within the last year.

The winning work is a photograph from Tahayori's family archive that has been transformed into a kaleidoscopic interpretation that speaks to an undisclosed trauma creating a dynamic composition and complex interweaving of layered imagery. The work claimed 35% of the vote, the most ever received, making it a clear favourite.

"The work by Ali Tahayori is compelling and visually dynamic," said Anouska Phizacklea, MGA Director. "It is a fascinating use of found imagery, transformed into a photographic work that resembles a patchwork quilt."

"It is a vibrant composition that speaks to complex relationships with family that reaches back into the past and brings the work into the present."

"The Smith & Singer People's Choice Award makes an incredible contribution to the Bowness Photography Prize that enables our community to give their voice to the prize," said Ms Phizacklea.

Ali Tahayori (1980– ) was born in Shiraz, Iran and is now based in Gadigal Country (Sydney, Australia). He is currently completing his Master of Fine Art in Photomedia at National Art School in Sydney.

Tahayori studied analogue photography and darkroom techniques in his hometown, Shiraz, where he spent relentless hours in his darkroom and worked as a freelance photographer until he moved to Australia in 2007.

Upon his arrival to Australia and after a period of self-discovery and not practising, he returned to his passion for photography, and since, he has been working as an interdisciplinary artist in Sydney. His practice ranges from photography to the moving image, installation, sound and performance.

His work explores the nature and possibility of still and moving images to represent traumatic memories. Tahayori uses archival materials, narrative fragments and performative modalities to explore themes of identity, home, migration and displacement.

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For more information about the 2021 Bowness Photography Prize and to view the finalists, visit: [www.mga.org.au](http://www.mga.org.au) for details.

**Image:** Ali Tahayori, *Sisterhood*, 2021, pigment ink-jet print, 120.0 x 120.0 cm – courtesy of the artist