

# ART ON THE UNDERGROUND

## Mitra Tabrizian's reflections on night time workers in London

Photographs point to the hidden stories of those who work through the night



LONDON, 12 January 2017 – **Art on the Underground**, Transport for London's art programme, presents a major new commission by international artist **Mitra Tabrizian**, titled '**you don't know what nights are like?**' The work features two large scale photographic works displayed at Southwark Underground station from January.

Art on the Underground invited Mitra Tabrizian to explore London and its role as a 24-hour-city to complement the launch of five Night Tube services in 2016. The artist focused on night-time workers, and interviewed a number of people who regularly work nights across a wide range of job roles. The content of these interviews provided an emotional backdrop to the project. From this, Tabrizian has created two panoramic photographs. In the first, an individual walks in an empty landscape. The figure is one of those interviewed, Laura, who has worked as a security guard for 15 years. Laura has been photographed walking through an empty landscape as the boundary of day to night is captured through a gloaming sky.

In a second image, devoid of people, an isolated building stands alone against a wide sky in a dawning light. These images stand in for a wider community of night time workers living as if they are on the edge of the city.

Alongside the photographic works, Tabrizian has included short interview fragments from a selection of those interviewed. These fragments provide an interior narrative of working at night and give a voice to the emotional reality of night time working from a number of different perspectives. One quote extract provides the title of the artwork.

The works are displayed on a huge scale at Southwark station on billboards on The Cut and Blackfriars Road. Sitting prominently in the city centre, the project is an attempt to bring the margin to the centre, to indicate the significance of the people whose work is essential to London's existence, without which the city would not survive.

Originally from Iran and based in London, Tabrizian is a renowned photographic artist and film-maker. She has had a long held interest in considering socially complex questions; migration, youth unemployment, post-industrial cities, the financial crisis. Tabrizian has used such themes to create sublime work that often, as here, explores the act of resistance in the individual, even when that act of resistance might appear passive.

**Mitra Tabrizian commented:** “I wanted to focus on the night-time workers, and the effect that working long hours has on their lives. Some have been working 12 hour shifts for 16 years. Fragments of the interviews are used to depict ‘interiority’, interior emotional states of the individuals who are living on the margins, running the infrastructure of the city, and yet remaining invisible.”

**Eleanor Pinfield, Head of Art on the Underground said:** “At Southwark station, Art on the Underground has the opportunity to show work on a grand scale, and Mitra Tabrizian has taken that challenge with two sublime large scale works. Starring out across the city, ‘you don’t know what nights are like?’ is a complex work that addresses urban life today. Mitra has listened to the experiences of people who work at night, and conjured an emotional state through photography.”

**‘you don’t know what nights are like?’ is on view from 12 January 2017, and will remain in place through to 2018.**

**For more information or to arrange interviews please contact the TfL Press Office.**

#### **NOTES TO EDITOR:**

##### **About Mitra Tabrizian**

Born in Tehran, Iran, lives and works in London, Mitra Tabrizian has exhibited and published widely and in major international museums and galleries, including her solo exhibition at the Tate Britain in 2008. Her photographic and film works are represented in major public collections, including, British Museum - Victoria and Albert Museum - the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Smithsonian Institution, US amongst others.

She is a recipient of several photographic awards, including the Royal Academy ‘Rose Award for Photography’ (2013). She exhibited in Venice Biennale (Iranian pavilion 2015). She has just completed her first feature film, Gholam (2016) to be released in 2017.

##### **About Art on the Underground**

London Underground established Art on the Underground in 2000 initially under the title Platform for Art, with the purpose of producing and presenting new artworks that enrich the journeys of millions on the Tube every day.

From single site large-scale commissions at locations such as Gloucester Road Station, to pocket size commissions for the cover of the Tube map, Art on the Underground has gathered a roll-call of the best artists in the last 15 years, maintaining art as a central element of Transport for London’s identity and engaging passengers and staff in a strong sense of shared ownership.

For London Underground's 150th Anniversary in 2013, Art on the Underground commissioned Turner Prize winning artist Mark Wallinger to create 'Labyrinth', a permanent artwork for each of the 270 stations on the network.

In 2015 - 2016, Art on the Underground developed *Underline*, a series of major commissions for the Victoria line from artists Liam Gillick, Giles Round, Zineb Sedira, architectural collective Assemble and composer Matt Rogers.