

Leave a Light on Laois



Dunamase Arts Centre commissioned a brand-new initiative entitled 'Leave a Light On' - a mental wellbeing campaign throughout October and November, 2021. This was a collaborative project, funded by Healthy Ireland Laois and run by Guest Curator, Caroline Keane, linking into Laois Connects, Downtown Portlaoise business owners, local schools and Laois libraries.

16 artists and 162 secondary school students from Scoil Chríost Rí, CBS and Dunamase College created window designs inspired by the theme of nurturing positive mental health in our community. Exercising positive mental health habits by developing empathy, self-awareness and self-management, the process of creating the artworks was as important as sharing the illuminated works with the community, and the impact it had on viewers.

'Leave a Light On' created a gallery of unique window displays across Portlaoise town, made of transparent paper artworks, hanging in town centre windows, lit from within in the winter evenings. Over a series of sessions, teachers and artists guided the students through the art making process creating a design; illustrating their thoughts and showing them how to expressively capture their ideas. The artists, art teachers and students worked collaboratively on all aspects of the artistic process, to make sure the art pieces expressed a sense of positive mental health and were ready for exhibition.

"For some window spaces participating in this project, there was an Artist Call for the wider community to participate, young creatives, artists, art students and teenagers who are home schooled. There was a really positive reaction and the designs which best met the criteria, based on the art medium and subject of fostering mental wellness, were selected", said Caroline Keane, Curator of the project.

A selection of feedback from Teachers:

Co-ordinator Scoil Christ Rí: *Thoroughly enjoyed being part of this project. Would love to be part of future projects.*

Co-ordinator Dunamase College: *Super idea – students loved the process of artmaking –*

A selection of feedback from Students: Teaching artists, teachers and ty coordinators commented that the students found the process very relaxing and engaging and enjoyed participating in a new creative process.

A selection of feedback from participating artists:

Caroline Brennan: *"A pleasure! Loved being a part of the project."*

Emily Miller: *"Thank you so much for this opportunity. It was my pleasure! I really enjoyed making the display and getting to know other artists. I look forward to working with you and Caroline again in the future."*

Susie Kelly: *"It was an honour to be included in the Leave a Light On project. Caroline did a super job coordinating everything and was a pleasure to work with, as were the business owners at Old Fort where my pieces are displayed. The payment came through relatively quickly and the experience was wholly positive... a fab opportunity to dip my toes into the Laois art scene. I look forward to becoming more immersed in due course and to meeting you in person along the way..."*

Along with Dunamais Arts Centre, participating businesses who facilitated a window for this initiative included Shaws Department Stores, Irish foot & Hand Spa, Nook & Cranny, Gerry Browne Jewellers, Anthem Music, Old Fort Piercing & Tattoo, EBS Main Street, the Office Centre, Tax Assist Accountants, Vimar Digital Marketing. Laois County Council also joined in, with Art installations displayed in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise. We're very grateful to all parties and feedback indicates they would be open to future such projects, which is a wonderful outcome.

The Library Service also came on board in November. As well as transferring some of the Portlaoise artworks to library windows in Durrow, Abbeyleix, Stradbally, Mountrath and Portarlinton, they also channelled packs and materials out to the wider community across Laois, encouraging members to take part and create their own designs for windows at home.

As well as those who visited the window installations around town on foot or viewed them from passing cars, a Virtual Tour of the exhibition could be enjoyed remotely. QR Codes were displayed at ground level at all locations linking to the full exhibition trail and there were physical map print-outs from Dunamais Box Office and Áras an Chontae reception. The virtual tour video presentation included information contacts and details on Mental Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention supports available to anyone who needs them.

A virtual launch and regular updates were posted online across all social media platforms, as well as the **Healthy Ireland** and **Laois Connects** pages of www.laois.ie, all Dunamais Arts Centre platforms and <https://www.dunamais.ie/residencies.html>. The project Instagram account has a record of images, video and illustrations of the work. All materials were widely shared and connected <https://www.instagram.com/leavealightonlaois/>. Excellent engagement rates for such a short duration of a project from start to finish. Averaging around 1,200 views/ engagement threshold for Each post and video released on social media platforms.

Artist led **Workshops** continue throughout November and December in various Laois Libraries (as conditions allow). An instructional video has been created for families to access from home after they collect one of the 120 of *Leave A Light on Material Packs* from Libraries or Dunamais, to guide them through creating their own window designs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WzL-Zv2rlg>

Given the past 18 months of cancellations and postponements, it was a wonderful opportunity to professionally employ artists, create positive links with local businesses and schools and to once again collaborate successfully with our partners in Laois County Council and Library network. We are very grateful for all of this support.

Dunamais Arts Centre acknowledges the funding received from The Healthy Ireland Fund, supported by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs, an initiative of the Government of Ireland, administered by Laois County Council, LCDC and Healthy Ireland Laois, as well as the Arts Council.
<https://www.facebook.com/dunamais/videos/258175316327686>

A selection of feedback from passers-by / exhibition viewers:

"Loved to see the bursts of colour in the town centre during the dark evenings."

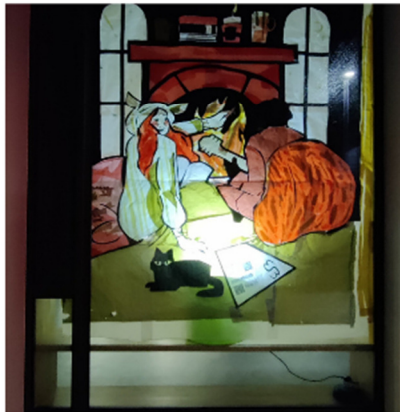
"Are you doing more? Would love to see it in more parts of the town."

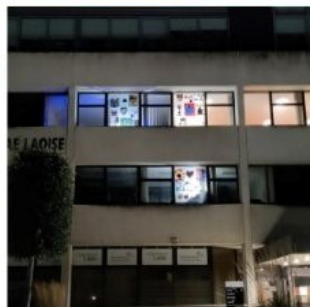
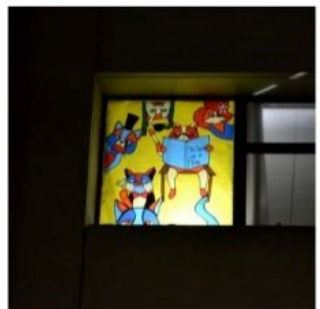
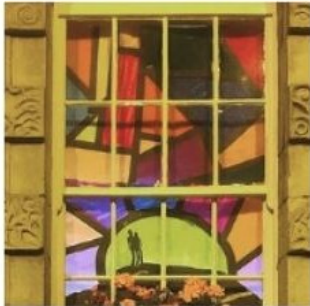
"Great Idea, looks fabulous."


Curator Caroline Keane: *"This project is a very effective and sustainable way of creating and displaying art while expressing an important message of mental wellbeing as it provides the opportunity to build relationships and connections between schools – teachers – artists – students – businesses and viewers in our community."*

Appendices:

- Collage of artworks in Library windows & Portlaoise Town Centre
- Art Trail Map front & back;
- Illustrations of local business facades and sample of QR code info at each location.







LEAVE A LIGHT ON




Leave a Light On Windows and Artists:

1. Dunamase Arts Centre
2. Old Fort Tattoo & Piercing
3. Nook & Cranny
4. Iris Foot & Hand Spa
5. Gerry Browne Jewellers
6. Anthem Music
7. EBS Portlaoise
8. Office Centre
9. Tax Assist Accountants
10. Vimar Digital Marketing
11. Shaws Department Stores
12. Laois County Council
13. Laois County Council

Artists:

- Sarah Jane Devaney - 'Escape'
- Susie Kelly - 'Thymbiocene'
- Mary Slavin - 'Hope'
- Maura McDonnell - 'Irish Goddess'
- Emily Miller - 'The Butterfly Project'
- Kate Deegan - 'Unfilled'
- Ailie Dunne - 'Down'
- Hollie Murphy - 'Autumn Arrival'
- Megan White - 'Cosy & Comfortable in the Cold'
- Catherine Brennan - 'Sunset on Waves'
- Jan Donnelly - 'How the Light Gets In'
- Suzanne Gabrysiak - 'Cat Meowham'
- Scoil Christ Rí, St. Marys CBS, Dunamase College





EMERGENCY / CRISIS CONTACT INFO:


- YOUR LOCAL GP OR NOWDOC OUT OF HOURS OF SERVICE 1800 400 911
- THE SAMARITANS 116 123 TEXT 087 240 9090 EMAIL: info@samaritans.org
- AWARE SUPPORT LINE 1800 80 48 48 Email: support@aware.ie
- NATIONAL RAPE CRISIS 24/7 HELPLINE 1800 778 888 Email: counselling@nrc.ie
- CHIEFLINE 1800 666 666
- GARDAI / EMERGENCY SERVICES 999 / 112
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE WOMEN'S AND NATIONAL HELPLINE 1800 343 900
- 24/7 SUICIDE HELPLINE 1800 247 247 TEXT: 'HELP' TO 51444 (PIETA HOUSE)
- 24/7 SUICIDE HELPLINE 1800 247 247 TEXT: 'HELP' TO 51444 (PIETA HOUSE)
- PAIN AND RURAL STRESS HELPLINE 1800 742 645


P.T.O


WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES:



Dunamase Arts Centre



Old Fort tattoo & piercing



Nook & Cranny



Iris Hand & Foot Spa



Gerry Browne Jewellers



Anthem Music



EBS Portlaoise


The Office Centre


Tax Assist Accountants


Vimar Digital Marketing


Shaws Department Stores


Laois County Council

EMERGENCY CRISIS CONTACTS:

☎ 24/7 SUICIDE HELPLINE 1800 247 247
TEXT: 'HELP' TO 51444 (PIETA HOUSE)

• JIGSAW Free Support Service for Young People 15-25yrs
Jigsaw Offaly/Laois 057 93 52871

• NATIONAL LGBT HELPLINE 1890 929 539

• SHINE INFO LINE 01 541 3715 Supporting People Affected by Mental Ill Health

• MABS (Money Advice & Budgeting Service) Helpline 0761 072 000

• ONLINE COUNSELING www.turn2me.org

• GROW INFO LINE: 1890 474 474 Supporting those experiencing mental health problems

• Living Links Bereavement Listening and Support Service Midlands Living Links: 086 1600 641


• SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT LIAISON SERVICE 086 418 0088 / 1800 247 247

• Mental Health Ireland www.mentalhealthireland.ie

• PARENT LINE 1890 927 277 www.parentline.ie

Learn about mental health and how to support yourself and those you love.

www.yourmentalhealth.ie



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive





Leave a Light On

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About the Project



Exhibition Trail

Laois County Council

Artists:

2nd year & 5th years
St. Mary's CBS
TY's Scoil Christ Ri
TY's Dunamase College



@leavealightonlaois
@dunamase.artscentre
#HealthyIrelandLaois