



We See You We Hear You

**COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service
Marking 40 Years of Service Through Art.**

copegalway.ie/weseeyou

COPE Galway's Domestic Abuse Service first opened its doors to women in 1981 and over the past 40 years has supported over 12,000 women and their children.

Over 40 years, the Service has evolved to become a leading light in this sector nationally, with an innovative approach to all our work, holding the client at the centre at all times. One in five women in Ireland will be abused by her partner at some stage in her life – and these women come from all walks of life: abuse is not confined to any class, culture, creed or career.

COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service in partnership with the Radius Project, ATU Galway School of Design and Creative Arts, commissioned this art project, supported by Medtronic, to mark 40 years of service which will give people in Galway an opportunity to pause and reflect on a grave societal issue - violence against women.

The hope is to see this period as a watershed moment –

looking back on 40 years of Service provision, in particular the three strands of the societal role of women, the nature of the Domestic Abuse Service, the changing landscape of Galway; and pivoting toward the future – how to shape the next forty years.



From the Artist

The aim of this sculptural work is to make a visual statement that draws attention to the issue of domestic abuse against women. It needed to be instantly relatable to the public eye and engage their attention amidst the deluge of media imagery we all consume on a daily basis.

“I chose to sculpt the head and face of women from a diverse age and cultural demographic, six in all, representative of the city and county in contemporary society. There is a seventh display case laid empty, indicating the worst possible outcome of domestic abuse.”

- Maura Finnegan

In essence, the sculpted heads embody silence, a word which occurred frequently in collaborative conversation with both the staff and service users of COPE Galway. The other frequently used word was fear. These deeply ingrained emotions are captured in the expressive eyes of the figures while their mouths remain shut.

There is also stoicism, hope and courage. The professional staff at COPE Galway guide the women they support back into their true selves. This can be heard among the many accounts and stories varying from horrendous physical, emotional, coercive and manipulative abuse to hopeful, peace of mind for the women, and the journey in getting there.

While the sculptural figurative forms remain entrapped in silence, their words can be heard privately in audio files, accessed on the COPE Galway website, copegalway.ie/wehearyou, or by scanning this QR code on your phone camera.



The Story of the Commission

This exciting commission has been shaped and formed by a series of conversations with the management, staff and women who are, or have been, victims of domestic abuse in the wider Galway area.

It started in January 2022 and it has been a rich, real collaboration between ATU Galway, COPE Galway, artists and most importantly, the women who use the service. The process was an open call to graduates of the School of Design and Creative Arts to submit working ideas based on the commission document, which outlined the aims and ambitions of the commission.

From these submissions three artists were shortlisted and paid a working fee to expand on their proposals. From these one artist, Maura Finnegan, a Galway artist and MA Creative Practice graduate, was chosen by the selection panel, populated by representatives from COPE Galway and the School of Design and Creative Arts, ATU.

The essence of the commission was to harness aesthetic means to ignite a meaningful provocative conversation that articulates the painful daily realities of the women and children who engage with COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service.

The art work also had to be accessible, relatable and resist the urge to drift into clichés. We believe Maura's sculptural work, with audio recordings by women who have engaged with COPE Galway, achieves these ambitions.



Why this project is important for our communities

We know that significant numbers of women in every community experience domestic abuse.

By highlighting the issue within a public space, we are showing our support to those women and their children; we are showing her that what has been happening to her is wrong, and that we all know it to be wrong. We are supporting her in recognising the abuse, in that she will see her experience reflected in this piece. We are saying to every perpetrator – we know what you are doing, and we do not condone it.

In short, by supporting this, our communities are supporting us in saving lives.



If you been affected by the content and issues raised by this exhibition please contact our helpline for support.

091 56 59 85

The Art

The art installation comprises seven display cases on plinths. Six of the cases contain heads sculpted from plaster that depict different women, and each one has a QR code that connects to an audio recording of an anonymous COPE Galway service user telling the story of her real experience of domestic abuse in her own words. A seventh box is left empty to represent women who have lost their lives due to domestic violence.

The 'We See You, We Hear You, art installation will be available for public viewing at different locations across Galway City and County, from November 25, 2022 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to March 8, 2023 (International Womens' Day).

Viewing locations and dates are available on the COPE Galway website - copegalway.ie/weseeyou.





COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service

COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service provides support for women, and their children, who have or are experiencing domestic abuse and violence.

The service first opened its doors in 1981 and over the past 40 years has supported over 12,000 women and their children.

Based in Modh Eile House, the service provides a range of one-to-one and group supports for women and children including, 24-hour phone helpline, refuge accommodation, outreach service across Galway city and county, children's service and training and awareness.



COPE Galway

COPE Galway Domestic Abuse Service supports women and children in Galway who experience domestic abuse and violence. We are here to listen, believe and support you in your journey to a life free from domestic abuse.

There is help available to you.
Whenever you are ready to talk, we are here.
We will support you.

COPE Galway
Domestic Abuse Service & Refuge
091 56 59 85 (24 hours)

copegalway.ie/domesticabuseservice



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Empowering
People

Creating
Change

Strengthening
Communities