

*Townscape* explores how the material and symbolic dimensions of place are accomplished in the rural town of Stradbally, Co.Laois. *Townscape* focuses on a diversity of home settings in a single midlands town as a way of accessing the relationship between home space (private) and town space (public) and as a means of exploring the lived experience of place in everyday life. The project brings sociology, community and the arts into collaborative practice. This kind of cross-disciplinary work is both experimental and highly innovative, and creates an important bridge to wider publics who are interested in the arts, representation, place, identity and belonging in twenty-first century Ireland.



The project involves three partners: Laois County Council Arts Office, visual artist Mary Burke and the Department of Sociology, Maynooth University. Twelve households were selected to participate in the project. The artist Mary Burke photographed each home, and working from the photographs has developed twelve home portraits. In each case, the householder was subsequently interviewed about their understandings of home, place, community and the wider locality. The project will be documented through a touring exhibition in 2018 and an accompanying book, *Townscape*, which will contain an interpretive essay on the power of place and the local in Irish society authored by sociologist Mary P. Corcoran. This will serve as a companion volume to the earlier *House Portraits* (a project involving Corcoran, Burke and Tallaght Community Arts) published in 2015. *House Portraits* was exhibited at MU Library in October 2015.