

The Reflections and Responses of the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group (MSAG)
on Eric Gill's *Annunciation* of c.1912

The following responses to this artwork include content that you may find difficult to read. This approach and text has been led and approved by members of the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group.



Annunciation, c.1912 by Eric Gill (1882-1940)

Watercolour on paper, 9 x 12 cm. Methodist Modern Art Collection, MCMAC: 052

Image Copyright © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. The Methodist Church Registered Charity no. 1132208

Over all the participants in the workshop felt that the work was dominated by the submissive pose of the young Mary and the dominance of the Angel Gabriel figure. They found the siting of *The Annunciation* in a bedroom disturbing. Below are a selection of comments from the workshop:

“The bedroom setting makes me very uncomfortable. It is a small space with no escape route. Why would he choose to set the painting in the bedroom of a young woman which links it with sex?”

“The Angel Gabriel appears intimidating, looming over Mary into her personal space – in her actual bedroom. Mary is kneeling, submissive, controlled – there is only a small window and no escape suggesting sexual posturing.”

“The work is very simple and the background is white which emphasises the foreground figures of kneeling Mary and the large Angel overarching her.”

“Nowhere in the Bible does it say Mary was in her bedroom. Knowing Gill’s history that seems very telling to me.”

“Mary appears to be powerless in a vulnerable situation and overshadowed by a dazzling, multi-coloured, most likely male Angel.”

“I wonder how she is feeling, I wonder what’s in the mind of Gill as he paints? Mary seems powerless and her vulnerability is clear.”

“It feels like a power struggle”.

But one person reflected:

“If we did not know the history of the artist, it might not impact how we see the painting.”