

East Ham Magnificat

MAKING ICONS OF JUSTICE FOR YOUR LOCAL AREA

Workshop Plan by Pippa King



Preparation:

If you want to do it like we did...

Find and print in draft quality, black and white, A4 images of local scenes as backgrounds. These can be cut in half or smaller if wanted. I did street scenes, the Food Bank, the street outside the community centre, a tube station, could have done the night shelter with the beds set out. One was a more abstract photo of Centrepont (for young homeless people in central London) and some fancy old buildings next to it.

Find and print in colour some traditional non-white icons of Mary and cut out (ideally with no halo because we are going to add those in shiny gold paint.)

Find and print in colour some images of pregnant teenage girls, or teenage mothers, some not white, maybe some with a partner.

Optionally find and print some men to be Joseph, some 'helpers' – I did food bank volunteers.

For all of these, cut out the characters, or if the workshop will have time, cut out some and leave the rest for people to do. If your images do not have the whole of the person, draw in missing parts as needed. I found a good face for Mary and drew the rest of her body. Maybe outline in pen if needed. I used Sharpie.

Print out lines from Mary's Song, possibly also the words of the angel to her, in a range of different Bible versions and a range of typefaces and sizes, maybe colours, but all about the right size to fit on A4 or smaller. Of course, you can focus on a different saint or different part of the Bible, e.g. the Beatitudes.

Pre-cut some small circles and paint them gold for haloes. Paint some paper gold for people to cut out haloes.

You will need:

- All the paper cut outs as above
- Gold acrylic paint and fine paint brush(es) and palette/lid to put it in. Or a gold paint pen.
- Glue sticks or pva glue with pots and spreaders or spray mount.

- Examples of what people are going to make. I took a traditional painting of the Annunciation (photocopy) and one that I made. But you can just arrange pictures using the collage materials without sticking them down and photograph and print them as examples. Or use the East Ham ones.
- Scissors
- Rulers, pencils, rubbers in case needed for drafting/cutting.
- Coloured pens (maybe acrylic paint pens) for adding to the icons. Or you could use paint, coloured pencils, maybe watercolours for the background. Depends on the time you have and the skill/interest of the participants.
- Optional cardboard for background/mounts
- Some spare white paper for drawing haloes, practicing, in case anyone wants to get creative and draw their own elements.
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Facilitating the Workshop:

I started by showing an old religious painting of Madonna and child on an Italian hillside, dressed in velvet. Given that Nazareth was a nowhere place, a bit like where we live, we are imagining Mary in East Ham.

Introduce the elements to choose and combine, like the examples. Explain the words might fit with the picture or contrast with it. I showed my District Line not Donkey picture – I chose the words because they were the ones I'd printed in the same typeface as the London Underground uses. And I cut up the background to fit the people.

Encourage people to choose a background and experiment (without sticking) – try different people, then words. Play until happy with the image. Haloes can be painted on afterwards, or made by painting circles of paper gold to put behind.

When happy, stick everything down, add haloes, add anything else you want – could draw in elements. E.g. Sally added graffiti crowns for the food bank helpers she had as the three 'kings'.

If you had time and people have inclination, you could have some old magazines to cut up for any other additions. They could draw in some symbolic lilies for Mary, draw an angel, make one of the people into an angel by adding wings...

Then have another go! People were hesitant and quick at first, but after the first one some kept going and got more adventurous. But some may want to spend a long time making one complex picture.

If people are ok with it, end by putting all the pictures on a table together to look at and talk about. We made copies and displayed them at church on Sunday.

If you'd like see some of the East Ham Icons, and the Eco-feminist development of the Icons of Justice from a workshop at Greenbelt Festival, take a look at www.pippakingart.com