

Basic Detail Report



The Message

Date

c. 1942

Primary Maker

Mary Swanzy

Medium

Oil on plywood panel

Dimensions

45.1 x 54.7 cm

Description

One of the leading Irish artists of the 20th century, Mary Swanzy was a foremost exponent of modernist painting and was one of the first Irish artists to paint in a Cubist style. Like Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone, Mary Swanzy studied with Andre Lhote in Paris. She travelled widely in Europe, to Yugoslavia and further afield to Samoa and Hawaii. A landscape and figurative painter whose work oscillated between many styles and colour palettes, Mary Swanzy painted and exhibited throughout her long life. The Message is a painting of religious subject matter. (Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone both also explored religious subject matter through a modernist style). The painting shows a nativity scene - where the good news of the birth of Christ has reached the shepherds. The pose of the Virgin and Child is reminiscent of a pieta and foreshadows the sorrow of the Madonna with the dead Christ in her arms. The Message, showing the birth of Christ may have been painted by the artist in response to the horrors of the Second World War and as a statement of hope among chaos and the triumph of humility over aggression.