

Basic Detail Report



The Woodcutters

Date

1904-1908

Primary Maker

George William Russell (Æ)

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

40.6 x 61 cm

Description

George Russell attended evening classes at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin and also the Royal Hibernian Academy where his friends included John Hughes, George Moore and W.B. Yeats. From an early age, Russell had an interest in mysticism, a belief which permeated his paintings and poetry. He adopted the word Aeon as a signature, which became shortened to Æ. Russell was an able and active organiser in the Irish Agricultural Organization Society (IAOS) and as editor of the journal *The Irish Homestead*, he devoted a considerable amount of space to cultural subjects from contributors such as W.B. Yeats and James Joyce. Such a blend of the agricultural with the cultural was not incompatible as Russell and Horace Plunkett believed that cultural self-assurance was essential for Ireland's economic recovery. His kindness towards the younger generation of writers led the poet Patrick Kavanagh to describe him as 'a great and holy man.' (JO'D) Two woodcutters struggle with a long branch of a tree. The background is painted in rich reddish brown tones with very few details. The woodcutter on the left is standing up; while the other man bends down to pick up the end of the branch.