



## Men of the West

### Date

1915

### Primary Maker

Seán Keating

### Medium

Oil on canvas

### Dimensions

97 x 125 cm

## Description

Keating attended Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, and was taught by Sir William Orpen, sharing with him an interest in visual explorations of Irish culture. Keating first visited the Aran Islands in 1913-14, and by the time the Irish Free State emerged in 1922, he had begun to develop an imagery of the new Ireland combining the Islands' traditional culture with a celebration of the industrial development beginning to take hold in the country. *Men of the West* shows Keating's Nationalism at its most visionary. Dressed in traditional costume and armed with rifles, the three men are seen close-up, standing out starkly from their background. Keating himself modelled for the figure on the left; his brother and a friend for the others, but the figures are idealised. Keating depicts them with unflinching gazes beside the Republican Tricolour flag, emphasising their staunch commitment to the cause. There is no extraneous detail, and the composition hinges on the simple combination of figures shown in profile and three-quarter views, respectively, endowing the painting with great force. Exhibited in 1915, the painting acquired additional emotional and political charge with the occurrence of the Easter Rising a year later and the ensuing political upheaval. It is the first painting in which Keating expressed sympathies for Nationalist politics. This composition, perhaps more than any other, symbolizes the rugged fibre of the Irish people in their struggle for political independence.