



## An Aran Fisherman and his Wife

**Date**

1916

**Primary Maker**

Seán Keating

**Medium**

Oil on canvas

**Dimensions**

124.5 × 99 cm

**Description**

It was while Seán Keating was studying at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art that he first visited the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland, c.1913-1914. There he became captivated with the traditional culture and

rural way of life, and he later said of the islands, 'There was a wonderful landscape, marvellous colours... grand-looking people... the costume was very distinctive and colourful, and so I said "This is it! - this is what I want to do".' Like Keating, many other artists, among them Paul Henry and Charles Lamb, and writers were also attracted to the west coast, which was seen to be quite separate from, mainstream culture during the first part of the 20th century. The Aran islanders, personified by Keating's fisherman and wife, were little affected by 20th century modernisation. They still spoke the native Irish language, derived their livelihood from the land and sea, and wore traditional Irish clothes. In this work the young fisherman and his wife are dressed in the typical garments of the West, she in brightly coloured homespun clothes and the traditional hooded 'Kinsale' cloak and he in a locally produced bainin waterproof apron. In 'The Aran Fisherman and his Wife', a strong sense of realism pervades as Keating pays homage to their way of life. It provides a contrast to the more militant tone of 'Men of the West' (see Object Number 226). The steadfast gaze of the fisherman dominates the painting and draws attention to the monumental treatment of the figures and to Keating's skilled draughtsmanship. (Catalogue Entry [41]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, p. 154)