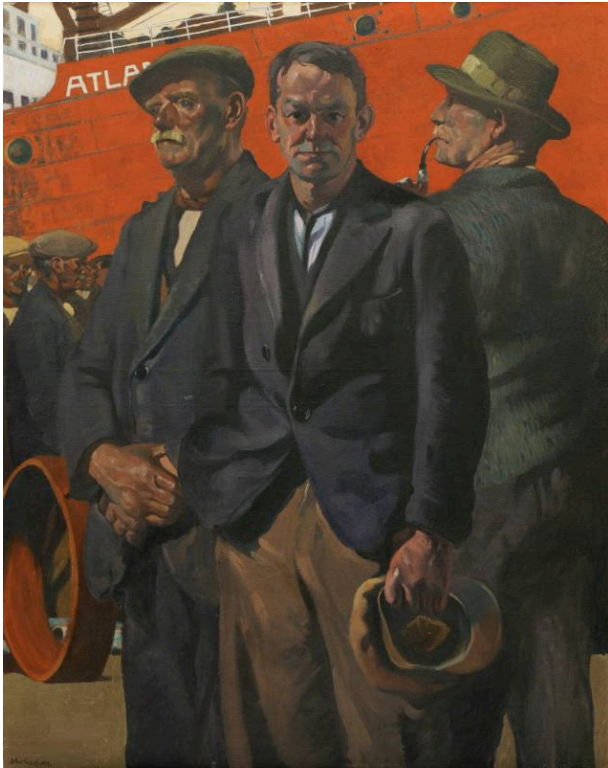


Basic Detail Report



Dockers

Date

c. 1933-1934

Primary Maker

Maurice MacGonigal

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

125.4 x 100 cm

Description

Dockers is a forthright statement in which MacGonigal, perhaps more well known for his West of Ireland landscapes, reveals his concern for the economically precarious position of the urban working classes. Set

against the dramatic red of an ocean-going cargo ship, the three stevedores depicted here await the result of 'the read', that is a reading of the names of those who would be given work on that particular day. The three 'button-men' whose portraits are painted here, were sent by the artist's friend and Trades Union leader, James Larkin to MacGonigal's studio to pose for this painting. This deliberate posing in-doors may account for the painting's slight airless quality. The two men facing us had left their native Co. Clare in search of employment. Where the younger man stares unflinchingly at the viewer, his older companion to the left, though less confrontational, is in his detachment equally dignified. The man with his back to us, from Dublin, appears to be more resigned to the frustrations of this daily ritual. Elected a member of the RHA in 1933, and President of the RHA in 1962, MacGonigal also became Professor of Painting at the National College of Art in 1960. This is one of MacGonigal's most successful subject-pictures, although the composition is somewhat stiff and lacks the freedom of his landscapes the three dock workers depicted seem to be drawn from the context of a mass meeting, but one is never sure as to what is happening; perhaps the theme is defiance in the face of adversity.