

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT

American, 1816–1872

Afternoon in the Adirondacks, 1849

Oil on canvas

On Loan from the Owens Foundation

John Frederick Kensett began his career as an engraver, during which time he experimented with oil painting seeking to portray the American landscape. Like many of his peers, he traveled to Europe where he sketched the scenery and studied museum masterpieces to help refine his new endeavor. In this painting featuring a scene from the Adirondacks, the influence of European masters of the Dutch Golden Age and their French contemporary Claude Lorrain reveals itself through Kensett's use of a carefully composed picturesque setting. Considered as a second-generation artist of the Hudson River School, the first native movement in American landscape painting, Kensett skillfully produced works presenting the rugged, natural beauty of the American terrain. Kensett's ability to produce a luminous foreground and atmospheric background was created through a combination of careful observation of perspective and light with a touch of romantic idealism.