



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT (1816-1872)

In 1864, James Jackson Jarves called John F. Kensett, ‘the Bryant of our painters’¹ for the way he poeticized landscape and led the artistic development of the Hudson River School’s second generation. While Cole invented the epic American landscape composition and depicted nature on a grand and lofty scale and Asher B. Durand took to recording forest interiors, which have a slightly more intimate feel, Kensett brought the landscape down to human terms. Through the fine detail of his brush and the brilliant illumination of his Luminist technique, nature became more intimately accessible to the beholder.

The renowned critic and art historian, Henry Tuckerman noted this personal element in the artist’s work when he wrote, “The calm sweetness of Kensett’s best efforts, the consciousness with which he preserves local diversities- the evenness of manner, the patience in detail, the harmonious tone-all are traceable to the artist’s feeling and innate disposition, as well as to his skill.”

Kensett was also honored for his noble accomplishments both in the artistic production and politics of his time. He was appointed in 1859 by President Buchanan to serve as one of the three art commissioners that directed the artistic decoration of the capital. In 1864, he served as the chairman of the Metropolitan Fair’s Art Committee, which raised funds for the U.S. Sanitation Committee. Kensett was a founder and president of the Artist’s Fund Society and was an active member and fundraiser for the National Academy of Design.

¹ Cited in Spassky, Natalie, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume 2* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985) 31.