



1/8 in. (67.6 × 29.8 × 3.5 cm)

Interior, Apartment with Piano

Date

1975-76

Primary Maker

James Penney

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

James Penney studied art first at the University of Kansas and then at the Art Students League in New York under the German artist George Grosz and the Americans Thomas Hart Benton and John Sloan. Although aware of the Abstract Expressionist movement, which emerged in the city in the late 1940s, he wished to ground his work in the observation of nature and never embraced the new style, although he did not entirely shy away from abstracting his subjects. His approach changed over the course of his career in such a way that he was never assigned to one movement or another; typically, his subject matter (primarily urban scenes, interiors, and landscapes) determined a work's style. Penney left New York City in 1948 to take a new position as a "fellow"—part-time instructor of studio art—at Hamilton College. He also accepted a concurrent position teaching graphics and drawing at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute (now the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute) in Utica, New York. He later became a full-time professor at Hamilton, where he had a profound impact on the study of art on campus, including with his first-year course exploring painting, drawing, and sculpture, until his retirement in 1976. The artist John Suplee, Class of 1969, wrote of his former instructor, "One of Jim's particularly characteristic lessons was that being an artist means being a workman. He taught this by his own example: he framed years of student exhibitions in rough wooden strips wrested from the college's discarded snow fences." Penney's work has been exhibited often on campus, including a number of times at the Root Art Center and in a memorial exhibition at the Emerson Gallery in 1983. A significant survey of Penney's work to date was also held at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in 1955, followed by a retrospective in 1977. This painting, created in the final year of his career at Hamilton College, was given to the Emerson Gallery in 2000 by Hortense E. Asher of Utica. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) Small vertical painting, highly abstract image of interior with piano

Dimensions

Overall: 24 × 9 1/8 in. (61 × 23.2 cm) Frame: 26 5/8 × 11 3/4 × 1 3