

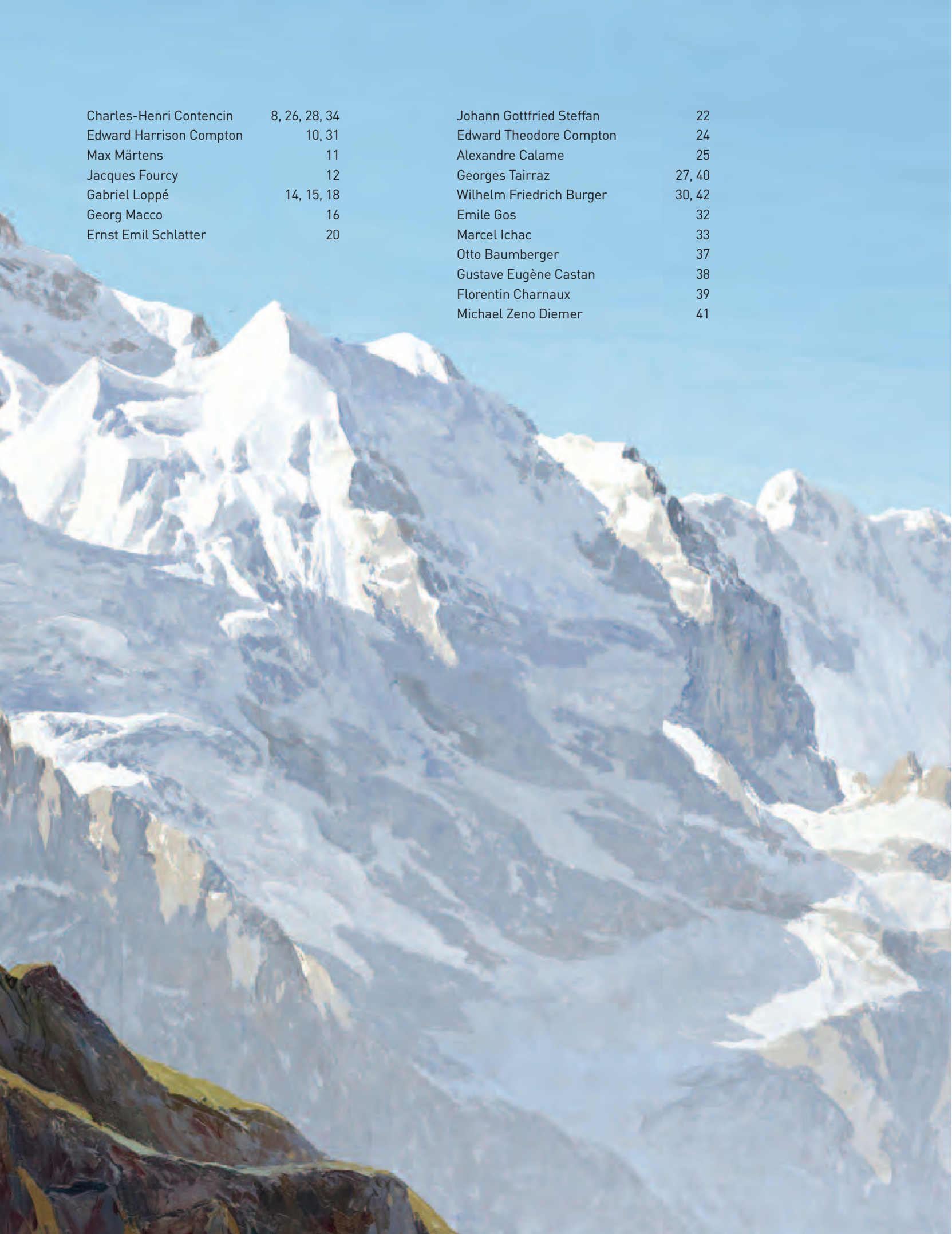
The background of the cover is a painting of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a wide, light-colored valley or lake is visible. To the right, a hillside slopes down, covered with a dense forest of dark evergreen trees. In the middle ground, a range of mountains with snow-capped peaks stretches across the horizon. The sky is a pale, hazy blue with soft, golden light filtering through, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, textured color palette.

# Peaks & Glaciers

2015

**JOHN MITCHELL**  
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931



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# Peaks & Glaciers 2015

Peaks & Glaciers 2015

Tuesday 27 January until Thursday 12 March 2015

Monday to Friday, 10am-5.30pm

Saturday 12-5pm

at

John Mitchell Fine Paintings

44 Old Bond Street, London W1S 4GB

All paintings, drawings and prints are for sale unless otherwise stated

Catalogue compiled by William Mitchell

Please contact William Mitchell on 020 7493 7567

[william@johnmitchell.net](mailto:william@johnmitchell.net)

[www.johnmitchell.net](http://www.johnmitchell.net)



I am delighted to be sending out this year's annual catalogue which accompanies our exhibition of Alpine paintings and drawings from the early 1840s to the present day. I hope it will bring readers the same pleasure that I derive from sourcing and researching the pictures in it.

Having put together fourteen of these exhibitions since 2001, I am all too aware of the need to keep finding a consistently interesting, relevant and appealing array of works to offer collectors each winter. However, the priority remains the same: to exhibit topographically accurate and accomplished pictures. With that in mind, I include where possible the finest work of the aptly-named, *peintres-alpinistes*, climbers who were gifted amateur artists or those painters drawn by their own artistic muse ever higher up on to the glaciers and mountains searching for a dramatic landscape. These *peintres-alpinistes*, such as Loppé, the Comptons, Contencin and Fourcy, to name but a few, embody the best of their school and their pictures are consistently the most sought after. But thanks to numerous exhibitions throughout Europe and specialist auctions of Alpine art, including Art Deco 'skiing' and resort posters, the story of the discovery and documenting of the Alps through painting is still being written. The concept of the Alps as, in Leslie Stephen's words, "Europe's playground" would have had a completely different legacy without the involvement of the Alpine Club, the oldest mountaineering association in the world. Indeed, our 2001 loan exhibition with highlights from the Alpine Club's picture collection contributed more than I could have hoped to this area of collecting. However, only a generation before Loppé, the Alps were portrayed as forested and snow-capped visions of the sublime in Nature. The greatest exponent of this school of Romantic painting, the German, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), contemplated these wildernesses with a veneration that brimmed with religious undercurrents. His mystic pictures and those of his many followers, including Alexandre Calame's early work, represent a mountainous kingdom devoid of human presence, far removed from the amphitheatre of conquest and exploration it would turn into by 1860.

A fine illustration of this contrast in generations can be found among the sold highlights from previous *Peaks and Glaciers* exhibitions. There is a sharp comparison with Calame's beautiful *Wetterhorn* painting from the 1850s (see fig. 3) and the almost abstract glacier study, *Gorner Glacier* (see fig. 2) done by his former pupil, Gabriel Loppé, less than twenty five years later. A generation on from Loppé another prolific Savoyard painter and *peintre-alpiniste*, Charles Henri Contencin would often paint deep winter scenery, conjuring the fallen snow with broad sweeps of his palette knife. (see fig. 4) His younger contemporary and fellow member of the Société des Peintres de Montagne, Jacques Fourcy, used an even more modern technique, eschewing preparatory studies or drawing altogether, working directly onto unprimed panels and canvases. (see fig.1)

Although the progression in Alpine painting from the early -and sometimes rudimentary - topographers onwards, followed the early phase of mountaineering and glacial exploration, it was the artists beginning to work outdoors - *en plein air* - who were ultimately responsible for the tradition that our *Peaks and Glaciers* exhibitions follow. These pioneers of Alpine painting like the earlier Caspar Wolf and Calame, Steffan and, later, Loppé and Compton were constantly making painting and sketching expeditions, churning out oil studies and watercolours in their attempts to record at first hand, and as faithfully as possible, the abundance of beautiful landscape in the Alps.

Today, therefore, their paintings and drawings have an almost unlimited appeal to 'Alpine' collectors, but the allure of the early twentieth-century mountain painters such as Contencin, Macco and Fourcy is equally strong. This year I am pleased to offer pictures by no fewer than four landscapists who are all better known as 'poster' artists, namely Schlatter, Baumberger, and Burger, from Switzerland and the Austrian, Diemer.

More than ever before, there appears to be no end of specialist property agencies advertising Alpine homes whilst extolling the merits of yet another 'undiscovered' resort or sought after valley. Many of the properties for sale or rent are indeed in fine locations, and clearly the popularity of the Alps as both a summer and winter destination is increasing year on year. Yet our fascination with this Alpine world hasn't really changed since the time of the early climbers and innovative *peintres-alpinistes*. Despite growing all-year-round populations, more and more tourism, industry and agriculture, Europe's mountains still incorporate relative wildernesses and lost valleys. Disappearing into the calm of a cooler and higher climate is to follow in the footsteps of these painters.



FIGURE 1  
**Jacques Fourcy**  
*The Aiguille d'Argentière, Chamonix*  
sold 2011

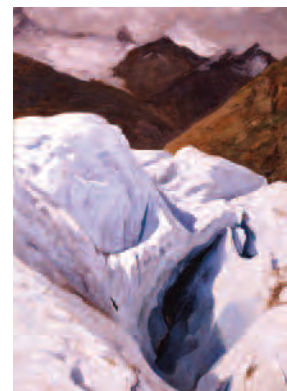


FIGURE 2  
**Gabriel Loppé**  
*Gorner Glacier, Zermatt*  
sold 2010

I am often surprised by how little certain places have changed, more than a century later. Whether these pictures today offer an accurate record, a particular scene remembered out walking, climbing or ski-touring or a more subjective and, perhaps, gentler recollection, their great variety in period, season and, above all, style makes for an enjoyable and interesting field of collecting, and one that is not only growing in value but one that is also reaching a wider audience of both active and aspiring collectors.



FIGURE 3  
**Alexandre Calame**  
*The Wetterhorn seen from Rosenloui*  
sold 2005

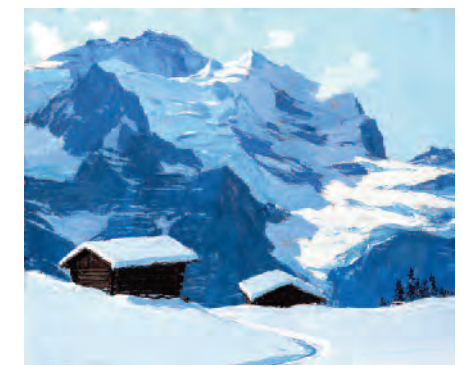


FIGURE 4  
**Charles-Henri Contencin**  
*The Jungfrau*  
sold 2012

Paintings and drawings can be found on the following pages:

Charles-Henri Contencin  
pages 8, 26, 28, 34

Calame page 25

Steffan page 22

Loppé pages 14, 15, 18

E. H. Compton pages 10, 31

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Schlatter page 20

Baumberger page 37

Burger pages 30, 42

Diemer page 41

In researching and identifying specific locations for these exhibitions, I am often surprised by how little certain places have changed, more than a century later. Whether these pictures today offer an accurate record, a particular scene remembered out walking, climbing or ski-touring or a more subjective and, perhaps, gentler recollection, their great variety in period, season and, above all, style makes for an enjoyable and interesting field of collecting, and one that is not only growing in value but one that is also reaching a wider audience of both active and aspiring collectors.

Paintings and drawings can be found on the following pages:

E. T. Compton  
page 24

E. H. Compton  
pages 10, 31

The prices now paid at auctions for Contencin's attractive pictures present as relevant an example as any of the rising appreciation and, consequently, values in this area. Specialist Alpine auctions (*Ventes montagne*) are now held regularly in his native France, in particular in Paris, where his mountainscapes are starting to fetch significant sums (see fig. 5). This is also the case for pictures by many of his contemporaries, but part of Contencin's charm and lure is the fact that he travelled so extensively. He evidently had a sixth sense for visiting the quiet villages and hamlets that are now amongst the most exclusive destinations, such as Zermatt (see fig. 6), Chamonix (page 26), Wengen, (page 12) and Adelboden (page 28).

Pictures by the Danish painter, Janus La Cour, (see fig. 8) continue to attract interest and are hard to find while the drawings by either E.T. Compton or his son, E.H are some of the finest pictorial records of the Alps from the turn of the last century. The increasing lack of formal oil paintings for sale by E.T. Compton has in fact helped his accomplished watercolours receive more acclaim and desirability. (see fig. 7)

Regarding Gabriel Loppé's life work, an almost relentless campaign of re-discovery, rehabilitation and promotion, waged for well over a decade has given this author much satisfaction as Loppé's paintings and pioneering photographs have been the subject of three major exhibitions since 2005 and two well researched and illustrated catalogues. Like a conspicuous Chamonix *aiguille* standing proud over its peers, Loppé's position of eminence and prowess is richly deserved and, as an astute *commerçant* himself, he would more than approve of the high prices his pictures now fetch. Nonetheless, the opportunities to find unpublished paintings of the best quality are fast dwindling.

The appropriate adage, "one painting is an acquisition, two is a collection" can happily apply to these Alpine landscapes and the need to add newcomers – but neither novices nor second-tier artists – to the *Peaks and Glaciers* 'base camp' of regulars is all important.



FIGURE 5  
Charles-Henri Contencin  
*La Clusaz, Haute-Savoie*  
sold 13 February 2010 for 22,000 euros,  
Blanchet & Associés auctioneers, Paris



FIGURE 6  
Charles-Henri Contencin  
*Zermatt in winter with the St. Mauritius Pfarrkirche*  
John Mitchell Fine Paintings

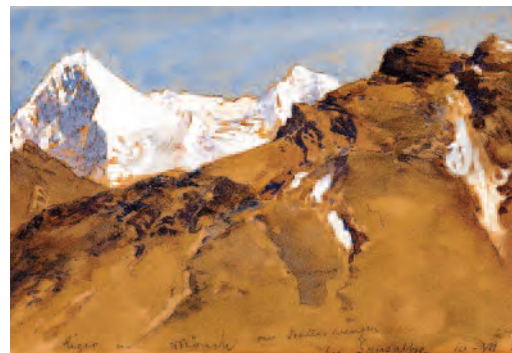


FIGURE 7  
Edward Theodore Compton  
*The Eiger*  
sold 2008

This year, the more modern colouring of the three paintings by the Swiss lithographers, Schlatter, Baumberger and Burger, add a bright new angle and the gelatin prints by the early photographers have deservedly joined the exhibition. At the same time, our topographical 'radar' is broadening in the search for an even more varied coverage of Alpine villages, glaciers and peaks. As hard as they are to source, decent paintings of the Engadine, the Tyrol and the Dolomites are all the more in demand, and no effort is spared to find the right work.

As a specialist ever interested in this absorbing school of painting, I am, of course, encouraged by the amount of 'red spots' at the end of each exhibition. What has become quite clear now after many years of dealing in these pictures is that they represent good value for money, but then I am bound to write that! On a more objective note, the diminished number of paintings for sale this year by the early practitioners speaks for itself. Free from art market hype and investment speculation these Alpine scenes offer a rewarding and, above all, highly enjoyable way to buy art.

All paintings and drawings are for sale unless otherwise stated, and we look forward to showing them to you here at the gallery.

WJ Mitchell  
January 2015



FIGURE 8  
Janus La Cour  
*The Breithorn, Zermatt*  
sold 2010



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*Tignes - les Brévières, Savoie*

oil on panel

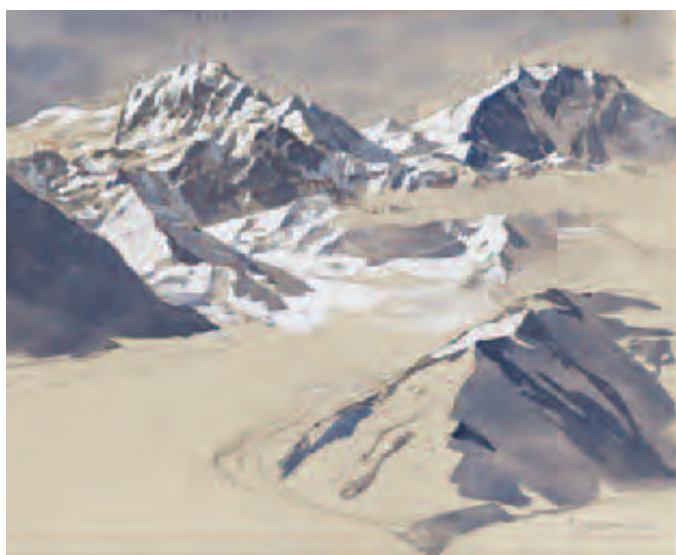
21¼ x 28½ in (54 x 72.5cm)

signed

Established at 1,550 metres the picturesque Tignes-les-Brévières is the oldest of the five villages that now make up the ski resort of Tignes. The mediaeval church was built in the Savoyard style and there has been a farming community active there since the fourteenth century. The small town lies off the main road to Val d'Isère and Tignes and has thus, by and large, been spared the mass concrete accommodation that has blighted the four other villages. Originally Tignes consisted of only two hamlets: Tignes and Tignes-les-Brévières until the huge hydroelectric dam, the Barrage du Tignes, was built in 1952 (in the face of significant opposition from the local families). Tignes was lost beneath the newly formed Lac du Chevril. Indeed, every ten years the lake is drained for maintenance work on the dam revealing in the process the original cluster of silted up buildings and a church that was rebuilt at Tignes-les-Boisses. The financial compensation from the French government paid for Tignes's first ski lift and the subsequent construction of the ski resort now in use, or modern Tignes. Contencin, a Savoyard himself, knew only too well the valleys and villages of the Tarentaise as well as the Dauphiné further to the south. Although his pictures are highly accomplished as mountain landscapes in their own right, they also offer us valuable reminders of how contained and unchanging these alpine communities must have been even less than a hundred years ago. Our *Brévières* Contencin is a perfect case in point.



**Edward Harrison Compton (1881-1960)**  
*The Zinalrothorn seen from Blatten, Zermatt*  
 oil on panel  
 22¾ x 30¾in (58 x 78cm)  
 signed



**Edward Harrison Compton (1881-1960)**  
*Studies of an unidentified mountain range*  
 watercolour on card  
 9¾ x 12in (25 x 30.5cm)  
 signed



**Max Märtens (1887-1970)**  
*The Jahnturm above St. Anton, Tyrol*  
 oil on card  
 10 x 12¼in (25.5 x 31cm)  
 signed



**Jacques Fourcy (1906-1990)**

*The Jungfrau seen from Männlichen*

oil on panel  
19¾ x 39¼in (50 x 100cm)  
signed

A native Savoyard and a true *peintre-alpiniste* Fourcy's work erred towards drama and sheer scale rather than atmosphere. Despite wartime injuries he was the longest active member of the Paris based Société des Peintres de Montagne, exhibiting every year from 1925 to 1990. Fourcy painted this panorama of the Jungfrau from the side of Männlichen-Gipfel at 2,343 metres, perched above

the villages of Grindelwald and Wengen. The smaller rocky summits of Tschuggen and Lauberhorn in the foreground are rendered in vibrant colours and shadows to make an even stronger contrast with the distant peaks over the valley. The top of the Jungfrau Massif captures the mid-morning sun as a mist rises and, far off to the right, the Breithorn rears up at the end of the Lauterbrunnen valley. In both his highly

accomplished, often large format watercolours, and his oil paintings, Fourcy tended to depict bright, sunny days in the Alps and was, in every sense, a 'colourist' who excelled at high altitude scenery. Nonetheless, his topographical accuracy in his pictures and knowledge of the French and Swiss Alps was undisputed.





**Gabriel Loppé (1825 -1913)**

*Sunset at the Grands Mulets refuge on Mont Blanc*

oil on canvas

19 x 28¾in (48 x 73cm)

signed and dated 1878

Private collection, England



**Gabriel Loppé (1825 -1913)**

*Lake Geneva: Château de Chillon at sunset*

oil on canvas

19 x 28¾in (48 x 73cm)

signed and dated 1875

Private collection, England



**Georg Macco (1863-1933)**

*The Morteratschglacier and Piz Bernina near St. Moritz, the Engadine*

oil on canvas

16½ x 24½ in (42 x 62cm)

signed

Inscribed and dated 1895 on the verso



FIGURE 9 Georg Macco *The Mönch*, sold in 2013

Georg Macco was a versatile landscapist from Aachen who is best known today for his large format, panoramic views of Spitzbergen (Svalbard) painted on a voyage there in the 1920s. He was, however, no stranger to snow and ice as he began painting in the Alps in the 1880s. Some of his alpine landscapes now hang in regional museums in Germany, in particular in Bavaria (Alpinen Museum, Munich). This inspiring view of Piz Bernina is our second work by Macco to be shown in our annual Alpine exhibitions (see fig. 9) but painted nearly forty years earlier in 1895. It is an ambitious and challenging composition given the mass of year round snow on the Bernina and on the then two mile long glacier. Macco used a wide range of brushstrokes, impasto and disciplined drawing in the crumples and bulges to achieve the required depth and proportion. As a pictorial device, the rocky outcrop in the foreground (complete with *scarlet paintbrush* flowers) adds scale and a vital splash of colour to break up the cold and reduced palette elsewhere. Equally, it draws us into the scene.

The Morteratsch Glacier is four miles long from start to finish, the largest by surface area in the Engadine, yet has retreated by over a mile since the beginning of the twentieth century. It continues to disappear at a rate of thirty metres a year with the meltwater going all the way to the Black Sea via the Inn and the Danube rivers.

**Gabriel Loppé (1825 -1913)***The Wetterhorn in winter seen from Grindelwald*

oil on canvas  
 39¼ x 29in (100 x 74cm)  
 signed  
 with fine original frame

**Gabriel Loppé (1825 -1913)***Self-portrait in front of a large canvas*

albumen print  
 circa 1865  
 5¼ x 5¼in (14.5 x 13.3cm)

FIGURE 10 Gabriel Loppé *Meiringen*, sold in 2008

In 1846 Gabriel Loppé took his first steps on a glacier up behind the Wetterhorn with an English climber, Beresford Walker. With this maiden traverse of the Strahlegg Glacier he marked the beginning of a climbing career that would endure for over half a century. Although it never rivalled Chamonix, Grindelwald would remain close to Loppé's heart for the rest of his life. From the village he made many climbing excursions and, in particular, some memorable winter walking trips with his closest friend, another Englishman, Leslie Stephen. Together in 1877 and 1879 they went on foot to Rosenloui, Meiringen and deeper into the Haslital. Their diaries reveal some extraordinary low temperatures as well as some impromptu overnight stays with local farmers in remote hamlets! (see fig. 10)

Loppé painted this majestic Wetterhorn view at sunset in the winter of 1885. The frozen Schwarze Lütschine river reflects the dying sunlight off the Wetterhorn's west face and behind the bare stands of alder and birch trees Grindelwald's chalets and farm buildings spread out and up the hill to the left. This painting had remained with Gabriel Loppé's descendants until this year having been exhibited in the first exhibition devoted to the painter in modern times; the 2005 and 2006 *Gabriel Loppé, Voyages en Montagne* shown at Annecy, Chambéry and Gap. With great finesse and success Loppé, the master painter of the Alps, converts the cold sky and wintry silence into paint.

Today this landscape has changed little since Loppé's time apart from the retreat of the Grindelwald glacier on the Wetterhorn's flanks. The peak itself (3,690m) dominates the end of the valley and has three summits. Whether seen from the east at Meiringen or west from below Grindelwald, near Grund in this instance, it was by far the most frequently depicted mountain for both Alpine artists and touring painters alike during the 1800s as its valleys were relatively accessible throughout the year. Further down the valley at Zweilütschen the Schwarze and Weisse Lütschine merge to become the Lütschine river which flows on to the Briener See at Interlaken.



**Ernst Emil Schlatter (1883-1954)**

*A view of Zuoz looking towards St. Moritz and Piz Margna in the Upper Engadine*

oil on canvas

18½ x 21¼in (47 x 54cm)

signed and dated 1919

With his lovely view of the Upper Engadine valley Ernst Schlatter is a most welcome recruit to the *Peaks and Glaciers* stable of artists. Schlatter is today better known as a 'poster' artist or lithographer. He studied lithography in Stuttgart before returning to his native Zurich around 1910 to work for the Wolfensberger Lithographic Institute (Graphische Anstalt Wolfensberger) where he introduced several important innovations in stone lithography as well as producing the bulk of his poster work.

One of his most widely known posters is his *Rhätische Bahn, Graubünden* from 1911 showing the famous viaduct complete with puffing train. Between 1917 and 1920, Schlatter taught lithography and landscape painting at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts but continued to work as a freelance graphic designer and artist. With his painterly style, not dissimilar to that of Ferdinand Hodler, Schlatter's bright palette was particularly suitable for winter scenes. Looking down on the village of Zuoz he painted this long range view of Piz Margna behind St. Moritz in a few subtle colours but using tonal changes to model the mountains. The sky is pared down too. The sparse clouds seem to drift over the afternoon shadows with more than a fleeting acknowledgement of Symbolism.



**Johann Gottfried Steffan (1815-1905)***Brienzer See, Bernese Oberland*

oil on canvas

18 x 14in (45.5 x 35.5cm)

signed and dated 1865



FIGURE 11

J. G. Steffan *Lake Brienzen*, 1865 private collection, New York

Although he was born in Zürich, Steffan moved to Munich as a young man where he became known by his contemporaries as the 'German Calame'. Over the course of his long working life, he undertook countless painting trips throughout Switzerland, concentrating on lake and mountain landscapes with a fondness for raging waterfalls. In this regard his subject matter overlapped with the more famous Calame's paintings, yet even though he was only five years younger, he outlived him by over fifty years. Like Calame, Steffan had a wealthy clientele and produced many hundreds of finished oil studies, particularly in the Bernese Oberland like our *Brienzer See* study, to convert back in his studio into easel paintings. These formal pictures, whilst often majestic and highly finished, often lack the subtlety and originality of his studies. In comparison to the *plein-air* studies, the passages of impasto and atmospheric freshness tended to be more subdued principally because Steffan was more than always working to a specific agenda for a client.

In 2011 another fine oil sketch of the Brienzer See by Steffan, dated 1865, (see fig. 11) was shown in The National Gallery in the *Forests, Rocks, Torrents – Norwegian and Swiss Landscape Paintings from the Lunde Collection*. Both canvases share a reddish priming which gives the rocky foreground such rich colours and, by contrast, the icy coloured lake seems all the more present as it ripples in the light breeze. Despite the acknowledged similarities with Calame's work, Steffan has, in general, a brighter palette and a wider use of myriad greens and reds. He returned to the same valleys, lakes and forests again and again but his pictures, the oil studies in particular, never seem repetitive or staged which can be a pitfall in the landscapes of the late Romantics. Today Steffan remains an underrated artist who left an important legacy of work, one that deserves further re-assessment in the form of a monographic exhibition.





**Edward Theodore Compton (1849-1921)**

*The Matterhorn seen from near the Rothorn Hut*

watercolour on paper  
13 x 19¼in (33 x 49cm)  
signed

The viewpoint for this first-rate watercolour by Compton is located on the approach slopes to the Rothorn Hut above Trift.

Opportunities to collect watercolours by Compton of this quality and finesse are increasingly rare. With a preference for lavender or violet colours and light washes of bodycolour, their delicacy can be susceptible to fading. Nonetheless, a perfectly preserved drawing such as this Zermatt panorama reiterates how superior Compton's skill was in this medium. Few painters could match his gift for conveying the high mountain atmosphere and light in these watercolours.



**Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)**

*A Forest scene with a waterfall, Bernese Oberland*

oil on canvas  
9½ x 11¼in (24 x 28.5cm)  
inscribed on the verso: *J'atteste que ce tableau est bien  
d'Alexandre Calame signé Amélie Calame* with studio sale seal  
with fine original frame

This small study of a misty forest with a waterfall beyond was sold at the 1865 Vente Calame in Paris. A year after he died, Calame's family auctioned off the contents of his studio. Many fine oil sketches emerged in the sale, works which Calame had neither exhibited publicly nor sold in his lifetime which explains his daughter's hand-written attestation across the verso of the canvas.

Calame was a self-contained and independent soul who, as a late Romantic, frequently wrote of his great reverence for Nature. Looking into and through the tall fir trees this intimate, even brooding, study in oils condenses the spirituality of Calame as an artist. Despite his acclaim across Europe and Russia he found his primary inspiration in the forests and mountains of his homeland.



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

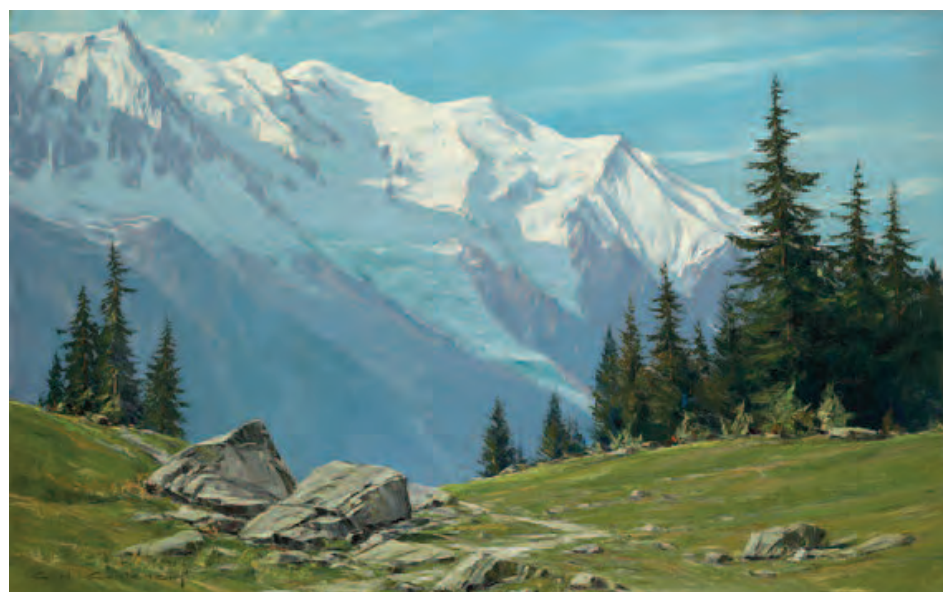
*Winter in the Wengernalp, Bernese Oberland*

oil on panel

12¾ x 18½in (32.5 x 46cm)

signed

sold 2014



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*Mont Blanc seen from la Flégère above Chamonix*

oil on canvas

28¾ x 45½in (73 x 116cm)

signed

sold 2014



**Georges Tairraz (1868-1924)**

*The Aiguille Verte seen from the Lac Blanc, Chamonix*

silver gelatin print with studio stamp on verso

11½ x 15½in (29 x 39cm)

For over four generations the Tairraz family were mountain guides and photographers based in Chamonix. In 1857, on a trip to the dentist in Geneva, Joseph Tairraz (1827-1902) bought an early Daguerrotype camera. He began taking portraits of family members and tourists in Chamonix and four years later, in 1861, he took one of the earliest known photographs of Mont Blanc. Subsequent sons and grandsons, namely Georges I, Georges II and Pierre who only died in 2000, continued the tradition as well as making mountaineering films. Today, original Tairraz photographs, including reprints from the old negatives and plates, are the most published and sought after of all the early Chamonix views.

Buried under many feet of fresh snow, the farm buildings of Adelboden occupy the foreground in this mountainscape of the Engstligenalp. Looking south along that valley Contencin depicts the Wildstrubel-Fitzer (2,458 metres) to the right and the five mile long Engstligenalp Plateau in the distance. Contencin's inventive motif of ski tracks in the foreground lends a sense of proportion and descending viewpoint to this wide and beautiful composition. Much of the picture's visual appeal derives from the simple and bold handling of the snow piling over the wooden chalets and the strong light on the surrounding snowfields. With so much white paint required, Contencin uses thick streams of impasto to delineate the edges of the roofs in shadow in contrast to the deliberately smooth areas of snow caught in direct sunlight. Adelboden is in the western part of the Bernese Oberland, in its heartland of agriculture and cheesemaking. With neither altitude nor dramatic peaks in its favour, it is surprising that the village was chosen for the first 'package' ski holidays in the early 1900s. In both winter and summer, Adelboden offers some of the most peaceful and unspoilt aspects of the Bernese Oberland.



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*Winter above Adelboden, Bernese Oberland*

oil on panel

19¾ x 28¾in (50 x 73cm)

signed





**Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882-1964)**  
*The Ferpècle ridge on the Dent Blanche, Valais*  
 watercolour and pencil on paper  
 18 x 23¼in (46 x 59cm)  
 signed



**Edward Harrison Compton (1881-1960)**  
*The Pitztal Glacier, Tyrol*  
 watercolour on paper  
 8½ x 12¾in (22 x 32.5cm)  
 signed

The Comptons, father and son, made countless climbing and painting trips to the Austrian Alps, arguably more than any other foreign artists. As talented and pioneering climbers they were able to sketch panoramas and glacier scenes that many native artists hadn't yet been to. It is worth bearing in my mind that as German speakers they were far more at home in the Tyrol and the Dolomites, than perhaps anywhere else across the Alps.

The Pitztal Glacier, the highest in the Tyrol, is now a major skiing destination.

**Emile Gos (1888-1969)***Mt. Dolent, near Chamonix*silver gelatin photograph  
11¼ x 9in (29.5 x 23cm)  
signed

Gos was the third son of the Swiss painter Albert Gos (1852-1942) and the brother of Francois who was based in Zermatt for much of his life. Emile studied photography in Montreux before taking over a prominent studio in Lausanne. In 1922 he produced a landmark film with his other brother, Charles, about the Matterhorn entitled, *La Croix du Cervin*. At 3,820 metres Mont Dolent is one of the least accessible peaks in the Mont Blanc range and straddles three frontiers, Switzerland, Italy and France. It was first climbed by Edward Whymper in 1864. Today it is a challenging climb for ski-mountaineers though infrequently climbed throughout the rest of the year.

*opposite***Marcel Ichac (1906-1994)***Climbers on an Aiguille in Chamonix*silver gelatin print – with studio stamp on verso  
9 x 6¼in (23.5 x 17cm)

Marcel Ichac was a French climber, explorer, photographer and film director. Between 1930 and 1950 he made many mountaineering and polar expedition films. He was one of the first people to introduce electronic music into cinema for his *Karakoram* (1936) and released the first French movie in *CinemaScope*, called *Nouveaux Horizons* (1953).





**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*The Albristhorn seen from above Zweisimmen near Gstaad, Bernese Oberland*

oil on panel

21½ x 39in (55 x 99cm)

signed

This winter scene was most likely painted from above Zweisimmen at Rinderberg looking south along the Simmental towards the Albristhorn (2,762 metres). Despite a basic palette of colours, Contencin uses the darker stands of trees and lengthening shadows to hint at cold temperatures under clear skies. An original and self-taught painter, he used a red priming on his canvases and panels to counteract too much saturation of blue and white in his compositions.

Born in Zurich, Otto Baumberger was a poster artist like Ernst Schlatter and another newcomer to these exhibitions. He apprenticed as a lithographer at the Zurich Art School from 1905 to 1907 going on to study painting in Munich and Paris until 1910. Together with Schlatter from 1911 to 1913, he too worked at the Wolfensberger Lithographic Institute as a draughtsman and artistic director and by 1918 was working for all the important printing companies in Zurich. During the 1920s he served as an editor for the satire magazine *Nebelspalter* and taught drawing and lithography at the same time. He was a professor of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology until 1959.

An important representative of Swiss Expressionism, Baumberger is acknowledged as one of the most well-known and prolific Swiss poster designers of his day. He created over two hundred and fifty posters in all, many of which he lithographed himself.

There is, however, no known Baumberger lithograph of this Val d'Anniviers landscape and nor is there any way to date it. The Zinalrothorn and the double peaked Mt. Besso are seen most likely from the road running between Ayer and Zinal further up the valley. In our *Peaks and Glaciers* exhibition in 2013, we had a large watercolour by Jacques Fourcy (see fig. 12) of a very similar location, if not painted a bit further back in the hamlet of Ayer.

The linen canvas that Baumberger used has a very strong underdrawing visible throughout. Across the foreground the paint has been applied broadly with a palette knife forming ribbons of impasto. Elsewhere sections of bold colour are separated from each other as if laid in by a 'Divisionist' painter. The curiously undiluted palette suggests that Otto Baumberger worked over an existing sketch for a lithograph poster. Regardless of the unorthodox technique, the landscape is no less a compelling pictorial record of a summer trip to the Valais Alps.



FIGURE 12 Jacques Fourcy *Ayer Val d'Anniviers*, sold in 2013



**Otto Baumberger (1889-1961)**

*The Zinalrothorn and Mt. Besso seen from the Val d'Anniviers, Valais*

oil on canvas

25¼ x 31in (64 x 79cm)

signed with initials: OB



**Gustave Eugène Castan (1823-1892)**

*The Corne de Sorebois, Valais*

oil on card  
12¼ x 17¼in (31 x 45cm)  
signed

Having abandoned his studies in literature, in 1845 Castan joined Calame's studio in Geneva as one of his earliest pupils. He accompanied Calame on a painting trip to Italy a year later but on his return left Geneva to work in Paris where he was influenced by the newly-formed Barbizon school of artists. Although he achieved considerable success in the Paris Salons as a landscapist and painter of the Normandy coast, as well as becoming an adjutant to General Dufour, Castan maintained close ties with the artistic colony in Geneva, now headed by Barthélemy Menn. By the 1860s these Swiss painters like Menn, Etienne Duval and Charles Humbert moved away from the realism of Calame's work towards a softer more poetic vision in their landscape. Castan began to approach his Alpine landscapes with a lighter palette and, in keeping with his contemporaries, focussed more on the play of ephemeral light than the realist Romanticism of his training. However, throughout his life he continued to make outdoor or *plein-air* pictures such as this small study painted in the Valais Alps and the *Pain de Sucre* sketch shown here in 2014. [see fig.13]



FIGURE 13  
Gustave Castan *Le Pain du Sucre*, John Mitchell Fine Paintings



**Florentin Charnaux (1832-1883)**

*Les Grandes Mulets et le Mont-Blanc, Chamonix*

carbon dichromate print, 1885  
8¾ x 11½in (22 x 29cm)  
with Charnaux Frères stamp

One of the earliest practitioners of mountain photography, Florentin Charnaux was a contemporary of the Bisson brothers based in Geneva. From a practical point of view, Charnaux would have used mules and porters to carry the heavy glass plates, camera and other tools as far as the ice-fields. The logistical challenges facing the pre-iPhone generation of photographers makes this early carbon print of the Grands Mulets Refuge, taken at over 3,000 metres, all the more remarkable and pioneering.



**Michael Zeno Diemer (1867-1939)**

*Climbers on the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, Chamonix*

watercolour on paper  
14¼ x 17½in (36.5 x 44.5cm)  
signed

Diemer's work is also a new addition to our selection this year. Although Austrian by birth, this prolific *peintre-alpiniste* trained in Munich where he gained a reputation as a battle painter having shown a vast 360 degree commemorative scene of the 1809 Innsbruck Bergisel Battle at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. In 1906, the Giant Panoramic Painting embarked on a memorable journey to England winning a gold medal at the London World Exhibition. In 2010 it was installed in the Tyrol Panorama museum at Bergisel. Turning to mountain landscape through his climbing, Diemer worked in oils, gouache, watercolours and woodcuts as his commissions ranged in size from hefty panoramas to post cards. This stark, unfinished composition of *gendarmes* and climbers on the Peuterey Ridge was possibly intended for a woodcut, a medium he had considerable success with.

*opposite*

**Georges Tairraz (1868-1924)**

*Alpinists on the Forbes Arête, Aiguille du Chardonnet, Chamonix*

silver gelatin print with studio stamp on verso  
11½ x 9½in (29.7 x 24cm)

**Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882-1964)***The Weisshorn seen from Gornergrat above Zermatt*

oil on canvas

25½ x 32¼in (65 x 82cm)

signed

Curiously, paintings and drawings of the Weisshorn do not appear very often. This elevated view of the mountain by Burger is only the second Weisshorn subject to be shown in *Peaks and Glaciers* since its debut in 2001.

For many climbers and devotees of the Alps, the Weisshorn is with little doubt (nor this author's) the most beautiful and classic of all the major peaks. At 4,506 metres it is the fifth highest mountain in Western Europe. First climbed by John Tyndall in 1861, the Weisshorn remains a tough and, above all, very long climb by any of its three prominent ridges. The Anglo-Irish physicist, John Tyndall, made the remarkable first ascent four years before the less challenging and lower Matterhorn was conquered and, yet, so few pictures of the Weisshorn seem to be recorded. The explanation lies perhaps in its lofty location, out of sight from much of the Zermatt and Zinal valley floors. Its splendour and terrific height can only be appreciated from high up and at quite a distance.

Indeed, Burger painted this striking *Weisshorn* from near the Gornergrat station above Zermatt. The Rothorn mountain, devoid of snow in the summer, rises up in the middle of the composition and across the Matternal valley, the Weisshorn takes centre stage with its final narrow and exposed summit ridge visible on the right hand side.

Wilhelm, or Willy, Burger is widely recognized today as one of the leading graphic artists of his time. He produced a prolific amount of well-known posters, some of which sell for more than his oils and watercolours. However, he was first and foremost a painter by training. He apprenticed in Zurich before leaving for Philadelphia and New York in 1908. After working there for several years, he returned to Zurich from where he would travel throughout the Swiss Alps, the Mediterranean and even Egypt for his commissions.



# JOHN MITCHELL

## FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

John Mitchell Fine paintings was founded in 1931 and remains an independent family business, now in its third generation. The gallery is located in a distinctive listed building at the Piccadilly end of Bond Street. We specialize in buying and selling European and British pictures from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries with a long-held interest in Dutch and Flemish Old Masters and eighteenth century English paintings. We also advise on auctions, framing, conservation, CGT and valuations for probate. Our rigorous selectivity in the paintings, watercolours and drawings we offer is backed up by long experience, integrity and scholarship.

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**For more information on this exhibition please contact:**

William Mitchell [william@johnmitchell.net](mailto:william@johnmitchell.net)

David Gaskin [david@johnmitchell.net](mailto:david@johnmitchell.net)





**JOHN MITCHELL**

**FINE PAINTINGS**

EST 1931

44 Old Bond Street, London W1S 4GB

Tel: +44 (0)20 7493 7567

[www.johnmitchell.net](http://www.johnmitchell.net)

