



# Peaks & Glaciers®

2021

JOHN MITCHELL  
FINE PAINTINGS

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# Peaks & Glaciers®

## 2021

### 20th Anniversary Exhibition Catalogue

All paintings, drawings and photographs are for sale  
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*Cornice on the Mont Blanc du Tacul: voie Contamine-Grisolle.*

photograph by W.J. Mitchell

To mark our twentieth *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibition, a dedicated and richly illustrated book will be published later in the spring of this year. Drawing on two decades of specializing in these paintings, drawings and rare photographs of the Alps, the anniversary publication will chart some of the highlights that have passed through my hands. The accompanying essay will attempt to explain – to both veteran followers and newcomers alike – why collectors and readers of these annual catalogues continue to enjoy receiving them and why this author derives such pleasure from sourcing and identifying the pictures that are offered. Above all, it promises to be a beautiful homage to the Alps in a year when many people have been unable to spend time in the mountains and inhale, in the great climber and author Leslie Stephen's words, 'all those lungfuls of fresh air'.

Details of the book and how to get a copy will be sent to all *Peaks & Glaciers* enthusiasts nearer the time.

There has already been some significant snowfall in many parts of the Alps this winter and, as per every season, it is difficult to know in advance which areas will receive more than others. Whilst climbing in the Dauphiné Alps a few seasons ago I met an old-timer French guide who, over an early supper in an end of season mountain hut, held forth as to why the forthcoming winter would be a severe one. I wish I had listened more carefully to his methodology based around trees, night-time temperatures and days of high pressure, since, as it transpired, he was spot on. However, by and large, it remains an unpredictable activity just as it is to know what sort of pictures will end up in each *Peaks & Glaciers*. Keeping to the meteorological theme, there has been a particularly keen wind from the eastern Alps this year in providing some wonderful and most welcome oil paintings, drawings and photographs from, for example, the Engadine or Graubunden. And there are more watercolours this year than most which can only be a bonus as, when successful, they can be some of the most rewarding of all Alpine views.

There are also several painters of the Alps, both known and less well-known, making a debut appearance in *Peaks & Glaciers* and as in recent years, I have managed to combine the traditional strong suit of the exhibitions, paintings by the earlier *peintres-alpinistes*, namely Calame, Loppé and Contencin, with a more modern bearing. It is therefore exciting and rewarding to be able to show work by the two living artists, Giorgio Avanti and James Hart Dyke, alongside some of the pioneers of the mountain landscape genre such as Adolphe Braun with his groundbreaking photographs and, in particular, the exceptional watercolour from 1774 by Samuel Grimm.

Where possible the aim of the short write-up that goes with each picture is to offer some topographical detail, a brief biographical context and an attempt to unravel the craftsmanship involved be it in oils, watercolour or, in the case of the photographs, pigmented gelatin. Whether writing about Old Masters, British or European paintings from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, this is a 'house' tradition that continues to this day in our firm which, I am happy to write, celebrates, this year, its ninetieth in business.

W.J. Mitchell

January 2021



**Johannes Schütz (1886-1953(?))**

*Piz Roseg and the Sellagruppe as seen from Fuorcla-Surlej, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 24½ x 32¼ in. (62 x 82 cm.)  
signed and dated 1934

This is the panorama that greets walker and ski-tourer alike a few hours climb above Silvaplana. The lake is at 2760 metres above sea-level and Piz Roseg is on the left with the Sellagruppe to the right. It is one of the finest views in the whole of the Alps and Schütz has depicted it as if on a completely still day; the peaks' reflections in the lake are almost symmetrical. The slabs of granite have come out in a murkier green when seen mirrored in the lake.

**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)***The Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, Mont Blanc, France.*

oil on canvas, 21¼ x 28¾in. (54 x 73cm.)

signed and inscribed on verso: *Aiguille de Peuterey*

This is arguably one of the finest Contencin pictures to be offered in *Peaks & Glaciers* since the exhibitions began in 2001. It combines all the best aspects of this *peintre-alpiniste's* prowess at capturing atmosphere, the colours of the ridges and the sense of ever-present drama to be felt when among the high Alps. Looking west from near the Torino Hut, there are not many more thrilling sights in the Alps than the Peuterey Ridge. The south face of the mountain as painted by Contencin leads up to the Italian summit of Mont Blanc. It is one of the classic rock climbs and ranks amongst the finest on the Mont Blanc Massif. The patch of pink in the upper left of the sky hints at a mid to late afternoon sitting and the swirling clouds suggest a storm has moved through.

Having survived the First World War when only 17 years old, Contencin trained as an architect and draughtsman and from an early age began to paint and climb in the Savoie and Berner Oberland. Initially he was employed by the French railways where he ended up commissioning works of art for their respective companies. Although he was technically an amateur painter, he was an active member of the Paris based *Société des Peintres de Montagne* and his paintings were frequently displayed in regional and national exhibitions. Towards the end of his life he was the President of the *Société*.





**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

*La Jonction: the confluence of the Arve and Rhône rivers at Geneva, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 9½ x 13¾in. (23.5 x 35cm.)  
signed and dateable to December 1871.

Loppé's wintry oil study depicts the meeting point between the Rhône and the Arve rivers. A tourist hotspot in the summers, the contrasting colours at the rivers' confluence are remarkable. The silted and creamy coloured Arve river descending from above Chamonix clashes with the turquoise waters of the Rhône as it empties from Lake Geneva bound for Marseille. With great skill Loppé captures here the deep and set-in cold amidst the shrubbery and poplars that line the river. A few people can be seen out on the frozen river by the watermill and the towers of Geneva's cathedral can be indistinctly made out in the far distance.

This *pochade*, as Loppé referred to these spontaneous sketches in oils, is a reminder that Geneva was home to the Loppé family for over twenty-five years and the city where he first made a name for himself as a painter.

**Traugott Schiess (1834-1869)**

*The Matterhorn, Zermatt, Switzerland.*

pencil, wash and chalks on toned paper, overall - 9 x 23½in. (23 x 60cm.)  
inscribed and dated: *Matterhorn in Zermatt 1861*



Schiess used both pages of his sketchbook to work up this fine watercolour of the Matterhorn. The detailed areas, such as the seracs on the terminal part of the Gorner Glacier in the middle of the composition and the handling of the farm buildings in the foreground contrast with the looser definition of the green expanses of meadow and forest. Despite its popularity later in the century, at the time this drawing was made, getting to the valley and village of Zermatt was an undertaking on its own.

Although Schiess's working career as a landscape artist lasted only fifteen years, he was a prolific painter and undertook annual painting and sketching trips every summer from 1857 to the end of his life. He studied in Johann Gottfried Steffan's studio in Munich and married his daughter, Emilie, a few years later.



**Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733-1794)**

*The Valley of Haslital, Berner Oberland, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 13¼ x 10¼in. (34 x 26 cm.)

signed and dated 1774, and inscribed verso *The inside of a Cavern with the Back of a Waterfall/ in the valley of Hasly Canton of Berne*

A Swiss-born artist who came to England in 1768 after working in Berne, Paris and Normandy, Grimm ranks high among the topographers of the period, and, at his best, his work used to be confused with that of Paul Sandby. This is one of a series of watercolours by Grimm of the dramatic alpine scenery between Meiringen and Grimsel, and has always been regarded as one of his most attractive Swiss subjects. It is also the earliest original work to feature in our long-running *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibitions to date. As such it is also of considerable art historical importance: even though

Grimm must have drawn it retrospectively, that is to say from memory and from sketches done on the spot, this watercolour still predates by seven years Francis Towne's *A View of the Source of the Aveyron*, a famous watercolour in the Tate's collections which has traditionally been seen as the epitome of early British artists encountering the Alps. Grimm's idea of showing the view from inside a cave out towards the sunlit uplands beyond seems thoroughly modern and lends grandeur to the otherwise humble subject of a chasseur by his campfire being visited by his wife and child.

**Carl Kessler (1876-1968)**

*The Bergkirchli, Arosa, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 19¾ x 27½in. (50 x 70cm.)

signed and inscribed: *München*



The *Bergkirchli* – little mountain chapel – is a well-known landmark which was built at the end of the fifteenth century. Arosa's oldest surviving building, it is still a consecrated Protestant church and a sought-after venue for weddings and concerts.

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

*The Matterhorn in winter seen from Findeln, Zermatt, Switzerland.*

oil on panel, 21¼ x 28¾in. (54 x 73cm.)  
signed

In this pleasing view of the celebrated Matterhorn, the roofs of the huts and the south face of the mountain itself suggest a recent heavy snowfall that has begun to soften and melt. The flat stretches of blanketed snow in light ultramarine are prototypical features of Contencin's style and contrast sharply with the larch timbered barns that have gone almost black in the sun. Today these small shelters and grain stores have their own charisma as remnants of the 'unspoilt' Alps.

For many generations, the group of hamlets known as Findeln were the summer homes for Zermatt families who grazed their cattle, grew crops and made hay on the sunny south facing slopes high up above the village. The livestock were driven up from the valley floor at the end of spring and once the milk had been turned into cheese it was carried back down along well-worn mountain paths.

The beautiful scenery was nevertheless largely immaterial to the Alpine farmers as their lives were tough and unsparing. Until the late nineteenth century the way of life had changed little and with such a heritage in mind, there is no small irony that some of Zermatt's finest restaurants are now considered to be in Findeln.







**Jacques Fourcy (1900-1990)**

*The Glacier du Tour and the Aiguille du Chardonnet seen from the Refuge Albert 1er, Mont Blanc Massif, France.*

oil on panel, 22½ x 30½in (57 x 77cm.)

signed

As an engineer by training, Fourcy had a successful career working for the French railway network, *Compagnie Paris-Méditerranée* Lyon- or PLM, before enlisting in the army. Despite losing an eye in WWII in 1940 and spending five years in a Rhenish prisoner of war camp, he was the longest active member of the *Société des Peintres de Montagne*, exhibiting there nearly every year from 1925 to 1990. Fourcy learnt to paint by himself and relied exclusively on a palette knife generously loaded with paint to recreate the *seracs*, glaciers and couloirs so familiar to him as a *peintre-alpiniste* and it took considerable skill to avoid over saturating the colour and tone. Fourcy's experience from a lifetime's climbing gave him an advantage in calculating the strength of shadows at altitude and especially in a late afternoon scene such as in this picture. His foregrounds tend to juxtapose the receding composition perfectly. The Aiguille du Chardonnet boasts an impressive north face which offers some challenging climbing routes, including the Migot Spur and at 3842 metres, the peak's lower altitude in relation to its neighbouring mountains to the west means that it tends to have a lower footfall even in the busier Alpine seasons.



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

*The Matterhorn seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland.*

oil on panel, 13¼ x 16in. (33.5 x 41cm.)

signed

The dark triangle of the Riffelhorn casts a deep shadow and reflection over the Riffelsee which, in turn, mirrors the inverted pyramid of the Matterhorn far off across the Gornergrat. In this satisfying and bold composition Contencin managed to conjure up one of Zermatt's most famous views with an orange primed panel and his trusted palette knife. The lake is laid in with horizontal bands of paint and the Matterhorn painted in a refined mix of cadmium red and ultramarine to render as accurately as possible the purple gneiss rock caught by the midday sun. A tweak of the palette to a greener hue separates the mostly clear sky from the smooth surface of the icy lake. Contencin could rely on a lifetime's experience in the mountains to be able to sketch such an oft repeated mountainscape this convincingly.

A recognized Swiss author, poet and painter, Peter Studer uses 'Giorgio Avanti' as a pseudonym. He lives and works from a studio in Walchwil on the eastern shore of Lake Zug, in the heart of Switzerland.

Avanti's use of intense colour has earned him the epithet as the colourist of the Alps and a lengthy article published about his life and work that came out in the October and November 2020 edition of Munich's art magazine, *MUNDUS*, was subtitled the *Kolorist der Alpen*. Drawing parallels with the Polish colourists of the 1930s and 1940s, the closest living counterpart to Avanti is the recently deceased American painter, Wolf Kahn.

Studer was born in Luzern and studied for a career in law before taking up abstract painting in the 1980s. Moving to portraiture and genre scenes a decade later, Studer has spent the latter half of his career concentrating on the Swiss Alps. *MUNDUS*'s journalist, Lena Naumann, characterizes Avanti as a twenty-first century disciple of Segantini in his interpretation of the Alps whereas the painter would align himself just as closely with the work of Ferdinand Hodler, the leading Swiss painter of the late nineteenth century and Willy Guggenheim, known as Varlin.

Peter Studer refers to his gift for poetry and short stories as 'painting with words'. His vibrant canvases display their own poetry, one derived entirely from colour.





**Jacques Daures (1913-2000)**  
*Les Aiguilles and Mont Blanc,*  
 Chamonix, France.

watercolour on paper,  
 22¼ x 30in. (56.5 x 76cm.)  
 signed with initials and  
 inscribed on verso

As a specialist watercolourist, Daures was an active member of the SPM, *Société de Peintres de Montagne*, and like his fellow climber and painter, Fourcy, (see page 14) also had a background in engineering. His career with the nascent French railway company, S.N.C.F, was cut short by the Second World War. Daures won a military cross and by sheer coincidence was interned in the same prisoner of war camp as Fourcy. Through their lifelong involvement with the SPM, their friendship endured for the rest of their lives.



**Richard Henry Wright (1857-1930)**  
*The Dent Blanche, Valais, Switzerland.*

watercolour over traces of pencil heightened with white,  
 7¼ x 10¼in. (18.5 x 26cm)  
 signed, inscribed and dated 1912



**Jacques Fourcy (1900-1990)**  
*The Mont Blanc Massif, France.*

watercolour on paper, 22½ x 30in. (57 x 76cm.)  
 signed and dated 1935 verso

**Plinio Colombi (1873-1951)**

*Winter fog in Klosters, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (40 x 55cm.)  
signed and dated 1917

This is a wonderfully atmospheric watercolour of a foggy winter's day in the Klosters valley. With its pared down palette such a drawing onto a mostly blank sheet would defeat all but the most accomplished watercolourists, especially in the handling of the low-lying clouds.

Thanks to his apprenticeship as a designer and poster artist Colombi could turn his hand to engraving, lithography and woodcuts as well as oils and watercolours with equal aplomb. Colombi came from a Swiss Italian family in Bellinzona and having studied architecture in Winterthur, decorative art in Paris and Bern, he had become an independent painter by 1900. He began painting snow scenes in these early years when living near Lake Thun in the Berner Oberland from where he made frequent forays into Graubunden and the Engadine. Colombi's oils were brighter and often more summerlike in colour than his watercolours and in this connoisseur's picture the violet and umber washes were used sparingly to create a sensation of low visibility.

One of the cleverest aspects of the composition is how the colours of the timbers on the snowbound chalets cool to almost black as the buildings recede across and down the valley. A dry brush technique with the lightest touch was used to delineate the leafless birch trees on the lower slopes.

**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

*The Gsteig bei Gstaad Valley, Berner Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas laid on board, 18½ x 23¾in. (47 x 60cm.)

signed and dated: 5 janvier '69

A superb *plein-air* study for a larger painting now in a private collection in England, this oil sketch is both topographically sound and compelling in the way in which Loppé rendered a crisp winter's morning. The snow has sloughed off the stand of trees in the foreground and with no recent snowfall it appears as if the valley has been under a spell of high- pressure weather. Looking up from Gsteig, to the south of Gstaad, the peaks from left to right are the Arpelistock above the Sanetsch Pass, the Sanetschhorn and the Mittaghorn. The mountain to the far right of the chain with a distinctive spur at its summit is the Schlauchhorn. Another oil sketch of this view, painted from further up the valley at Feutersoey, was sold in *Peaks & Glaciers 2015* (see fig. 1 and *LOPPE Peintre-Alpiniste*, W.J. Mitchell, London. 2018, p. 131, no. 94) but was miscatalogued by this author as being painted in the Hasliberg.

Loppé began visiting this part of the Berner Oberland in the late 1860s and often followed the same itinerary, travelling from Bern via Thun where he would meet up with his English friends such as the Stephens and Wills families. Despite its inaccessibility at that time of year, the peace and beauty of the sparsely populated valleys appealed to Loppé and hardly a winter passed over the next twenty years when he did not plan a painting trip there as well as the chance to walk with his children. Nonetheless, Loppé's oil studies and finished paintings from this region remain hard to source.



fig 1



**Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)**

*After the storm: Grimsel Pass, Berner Oberland, Switzerland*  
oil on canvas, 13 x 16in. (33 x 41 cm.)  
signed

## LITERATURE:

V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.345, no.136

The Grimsel Pass links the cantons of Valais and Bern, where the Rhône river meets the Aare. Even today the pass can remain closed for several months a year due to snowfall and in Calame's time this was a veritable wilderness. Nevertheless, the Grimsel and Handeck regions were some of his favourite places to make painting trips to- often staying there for weeks on end. Dateable to 1840, this beautiful early work was once only known of from a lithograph and comes close to being Calame at his best. It is also interesting to note that it belonged to the Geneva collector, John Revilliod, who would champion his friend and fellow Genevan's work throughout his life. To the painter, the combination of the feeling of solitude and chaos brought on by the passing storm represented the extreme Romantic sensation.

The rain was skilfully recreated by scratching the palette knife through the wet glazes on the paint surface. The motif of the trees snapped by the forces of nature became a recurring theme in Calame's work as did his tendency to depict solitary fir trees, storm battered but surviving, in lieu of people in his pictures. Likewise, the small patch of blue sky right at the top of this oil study was doubtless an intimation of Providence.





Henry Bright was part of the Norwich School of painting and made his name as a specialist in 'coloured chalks', now known as pastels. He made several trips abroad, including one to the Val d'Aosta in the winter of 1849 from which this evocative panorama dates.

In the vein of the Alpine landscapes by Edward Lear, Elijah Walton and Turner, Bright's view of the south face

of Mont Blanc seen from Courmayeur mixes atmosphere and topography with a specific emphasis, common to the itinerant British painter, on the sublime aspect of the scene. An ominous cloud of spindrift and fog plunges down the couloir to the right of the village overseen by a wheeling vulture. With its distinctive parish church, San Pantaleone, appears dwarfed by the arena of surrounding mountains.

**Henry Bright (1810-1873)**

*Winter in Courmayeur with Mont Chetif and Mont Blanc in the background, Italy.*

pencil, pastel and bodycolour, 23¾ x 33½in. (60 x 85cm.)  
signed lower right

**Plinio Colombi (1873-1951)**

*Mettlenalp, Wengen, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 19¼ x 15½in. (49 x 39cm.)  
signed and dated 1942



The patches of grass and the bare trees suggest a late winter or spring in this accomplished watercolour which relies on delicate washes of ultramarine violet to replicate the undulating meadows under snow. Colombi made this sketch from Mettlenalp just beyond Wengernalp where the Jungfrau descends into the steep Lauterbrunnen Valley and behind this flank of mountain emerge the famous Trummelbach Falls.

**Carl Kessler (1876-1968)**

*Winter in the Klosters Valley, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 22 x 30¼in. (56 x 77cm.)  
signed and inscribed: München

Kessler was a specialist watercolourist of mountain scenery and worked throughout the Tyrol and the Engadine. Although his pictures seem deceptively simple and softly executed, the wide expanses of snow are formed of many subtle washes, graded to convey the distribution of light on the blanketed meadows and slopes. Kessler favoured clear, cold days and his skies are often dappled with yellow ochre clouds. This wintry watercolour depicts the view along the valley due east from the Monbiel hamlet in Klosters; from right to left are the peaks of the Wisshorn and Canardhorn.





**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

The Grisons sketchbook, 1866

From the early to mid-1850s onwards Loppé produced hundreds of studies in oils and pencils made *en plein air* and some of these drawings of rocks, glaciers, torrents, bridges, footpaths, plants and conifers found favour with publishers. Financial independence was still a way off but from the sale of them he was able to raise money to cover his rent, the cost of his artist's materials and his excursions. Most of the pencil drawings were done on blue or ochre papers using white *gouache*, or bodycolour, for highlights. Loppé's style was careful and precise with detailed attention given to the handling of the foregrounds as well as recording the locations.

In 1854 Loppé received his first important illustration commission from a publisher: *La Savoie historique et pittoresque* was an ambitious two-volume work to contain over 130 drawings and Loppé would produce nearly two-thirds of them with a further three artists contributing the rest. Unfortunately, as the completed book never materialized none of these drawings have ever been found. This relatively large body of work probably disappeared into some editor's vault in Chambéry never to be seen again. They may reappear one day but the recent discovery of an entire sketchbook by Loppé entitled *Voyages à Grisons* and dated on the cover 1866, is a good indicator of how the drawings would look.

There are very few oil paintings by Loppé of the Engadine region that have yet to come to light and as his diaries from the 1850s and 1860s have been lost, this appears to be the only known trip he took to Graubunden.

As with many of his Alpine drawings, the only colour that Loppé used was a white gouache which he applied to delineate waterfalls, clouds or glaciers. On some sheets the pigment has deteriorated naturally over time but the medium was obviously applied with a brush over the finished drawings. For a painter who was less at ease with painting rocks and trees in oils than snow and ice, it is interesting to see how delicately and accurately his pencil brought to life the rocky foregrounds and wooded areas in *Voyages à Grisons*.



Majola: Col de Majola, 17 juillet



Lac de Sils: Lac de Sils et Piz della Margna, 17 Juillet 1866



Brienz: Château de Belfort entre Alvena et Brienz (Grisons) 24 juillet 1866



St. Moritz: Lac de St. Moritz, 18 Juillet 66



Pontresina: Le Val Rosegg vu de Pontresina, 20 juillet



Pontresina: Arolles et Mélèzes Vallée de Pontresina, 22 juillet



Linthal: La Selbsanft vu du Linthal, 16 Juillet 1866



Poschiavo: La Vallée et le lac de Poschiavo vus de Grün, 21 juillet 66

**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

15 pencil drawings with gouache on sepia and blue sketchbook paper - each 9¼ x 11¾in. (23.5 x 30cm.) with inscriptions and dates



Albula: Lac superieur de l'Albula, 23 juillet '66



Val d'Avers: Cascade à l'entrée du Val d'Avers, 16 juillet 1866



Bergün: Pont sur l'Albula au dessus de Bergün, 23 juillet



Bernina Massif: Bernina et Glacier de Morteratsch, 20 juillet



Linthal: Cascade de Falschbach, 13 juillet



Val d'Avers: Val d'Avers, 17 juillet 1866



St. Moritz: Lac de St. Moritz, 18 Juillet



Emulating the Divisionist technique, Schütz applied striations of paint in great quantities to his canvas. Looking from Ober Alpina across the frozen lakes towards Piz Margna, St. Moritz can be made out in the distance. The paint surface in the foreground bristles with impasto that has been worked upon and grooved to render skiers' tracks, the undulating meadows under deep snow, shadows and even the foliage on the spruces and larches. It is a remarkably successful, if unusual,

picture and raises the question as to why this Swiss painter is not better known. The forty or so pictures recorded by him are all from the 1920s and 1930s and seem to be exclusively of the Engadine. Schütz was possibly an amateur painter and like many of his fellow mountain landscapists of the time, in the sway of the Divisionist style of painting as seen in Segantini's work and shown in this catalogue with Maggi's *Mont Blanc du Tacul*. (see page 42).

**Johannes Schütz (1886-1953(?))**

*St. Moritz in winter, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 24½ x 32¼in. (62 x 82cm.)

signed and dated 1933



**James Hart Dyke (b.1966)**

*Flow - glacier study*

oil on acrylic on paper, 65¾ x 59in. (167 x 150cm.)

signed. 2019

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

*The Aiguille du Goûter and Aiguille de Bionnassay, Mont Blanc, France.*

oil on canvas, 21¼ x 28¾in. (54 x 73cm.)  
signed and inscribed on verso: *Aiguille de Bionnassay*

This is an unusual but spectacular viewpoint in Contencin's canon of Mont Blanc scenery. It is the view from above the hamlets of Bionnassay and les Maisons in the Contamines valley to the east of the Mont Blanc massif. What is striking is the amount of snow that has accumulated on the ridge and the glacier that lies between the Aiguille de Bionnassay to the right and the Aiguille du Goûter's west face on the left. It must have been a record snowfall the year Contencin painted this but as he rarely made topographical changes or employed artistic licence in his compositions it is hard to pinpoint the location thought to be near what is today the Refuge de Fioux. The whole scene is enveloped in heavy snow. In contrast to the afternoon sunlight hitting the trees flanking the track made by skis, the ridge descending to the west of the Aiguille de Bionnassay casts a heavy shadow across half the picture surface. In the middle distance, before the flank of les Rognes just below the ridge on the skyline, the beginnings of fog can be seen.





**Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)**

*Mountain torrent with the Steinlauhorn above Handeck, Berner Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 11 x 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in. (28 x 37.5cm.)  
signed. Painted circa 1850

PROVENANCE:

Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York.

EXHIBITED:

*Alpine Views: Alexandre Calame and the Swiss Landscape*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, U.S.A. October 8-December 31, 2006. pl. 8  
*Den Ville Natur Sveitsisk og Norsk Romantikk*, Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, Tromsø and Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen, Norway, September 29, 2007 – August 31, 2008, p.80, no. 10  
*Forest, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscapes from the Lunde Collection*, The National Gallery, London. June 22-September 18, 2011, no. 35

This small canvas is prime Calame and demonstrates just what a master painter he was in capturing his country's beautiful scenery. Using a series of v-shaped compositional planes with sharp shadows, Calame succeeded in creating an amazing sense of depth and drama in this mountainscape. The stand of fir trees beside the rushing torrent separates the chasm from the far-off peak and, equally, points to Calame's long-lasting assimilation of the Dutch Master, Jacob Ruisdael's landscapes. It is noteworthy that Calame made the giant boulders in the foreground a primary feature in the picture. Whereas many of his contemporaries and followers struggled to recreate rocks faithfully, including Gabriel Loppé, Calame excelled at painting them. His closest rival in this aspect was E.T.Compton, born a generation on.

Many of Calame's finest paintings derive from the environs of Handeck in the eastern Berner Oberland. With its steep valleys, waterfalls and views of lofty mountain ridges and tops, the region offered nearly all the motifs that recurred in his compositions.



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

*L'Aiguille de Varan seen from the Montjoie Valley, Savoie, France.*

oil on canvas, 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 24in. (50 x 61cm.)  
signed

This late afternoon scene by Contencin was painted near Bionnay situated on the Route des Contamines between St. Gervais and Les Contamines. A band of mist has descended over St. Gervais and to the north the sunlight is catching the Aiguille de Varan which towers above the town. This remains a somewhat secluded valley lying between Megève and Chamonix and a 15,000-acre nature reserve was set up in the 1970s to protect the area. The riny Bon-Nant river, captured in a passage of sap green, flows into this wintry landscape which is suffused with hues of pink to capture the declining light. The canvas's reddish priming combined with the tinted areas added to the forested slopes, the snowfields and rocks, make for a subtle and beautiful recollection of the Savoie.



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

*Le refuge du Couvercle, Mont Blanc, France.*

oil on canvas, 13 x 18in. (33 x 46cm.)  
signed

When seen from the Couvercle Hut the enormous bowl of the Glacier du Géant lives up to its name in size and scale. With Mont Blanc in the background and the glacier still half in shadow, Contencin created a superb impression of one of the best panoramas in the Alps in this relatively small canvas. At just under 2,700 metres the location takes a decent glacier traverse and some exposed sets of ladders to get to, and thus the view rewards the more dedicated walker and climber. The Tour Ronde flanks Mont Blanc to its left and the imposing Mont Blanc du Tacul rears up in front of it.

From a palette point of view the patch of snow in the foreground which is Prussian blue mixed with lead white acts a thermometer: the morning sun has not reached this flank of the mountain yet and Contencin has skilfully reproduced the sense of cold.

The first refuge was built on the original bivouac site under the *Rocher du Couvercle*, -the obelisk-like rock overhanging it. In 1932, after Contencin painted this picture, the refuge was moved seventy metres away to a promontory overlooking the Mer de Glace and the Tacul and Talèfre glaciers.



**Wilhelm Ludwig Lehmann (1861-1932)**

*A panoramic view from above Davos, Graubunden, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 35<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 50<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in. (91 x 129cm.)  
signed and dated 1908

Lehmann was born in Zurich to German parents and together with Arnold Böcklin became one of the painters who formed the Munich Secession in 1892. Lehmann worked on numerous public commissions throughout Switzerland and his pictures are well represented in both Swiss and German museum collections. His series of twenty-two frescos decorate Zurich's university entrance hall and the town hall has two panoramic views of the Old City by him.

Lehmann lived in Davos from 1909-1912 before settling in Munich and comparing this winter landscape with a painting of the same period and similar dimensions in Munich's Neue Pinakothek, *Herbstmorgen bei Davos*, it is tempting to think that the artist based himself in the same spot. Looking south towards the Engadine, Lehmann painted this snowy meadow criss-crossed with ski tracks from up on western side of the Davos valley. The prominent tooth-like peak of the Tinzenhorn pokes up to the left of Piz Mitgel and far off to the east at the edge of the composition is Piz Kesch, the highest mountain in the Albula Alps above Bergün.



**Cesare Maggi (1881-1961)**

*Mont Blanc du Tacul seen from the Glacier du Géant, Chamonix, France.*

oil on panel, 10½ x 14½in. (27 x 37cm.)  
signed

Looking up from the Glacier du Géant at the foot of the Aiguille du Toule, from right to left, the Mont Blanc du Tacul, Mont Maudit and on the far left the dome of Mont Blanc itself form a series of imposing peaks all over 4000 metres. The shoulder of the Tour Ronde protrudes into the left of the composition on this small panel painted at over 3,000 metres in a series of rapid brushstrokes.

Closely aligned with the work and style of Giovanni Segantini, Maggi was one of the leading representatives of the second generation of Divisionist painters in Italy. Having studied in Florence, Milan and Paris, Maggi spent time painting in the Engadine and the Val d'Aosta before moving to Turin where he signed a contract in 1900 with the leading dealer and promoter of the Divisionist painters, and a painter himself, Victor Grubicy. Maggi took part in the major Italian exhibitions of his time where he gained a reputation as the *Pittore delle montagne* (the mountain painter) even if he was an accomplished portraitist too. In 1912 the Venice Biennale devoted an entire room to his work at the Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte. Maggi was made professor of painting at Turin's Albertina Academy in 1936 and was considered one of the Val d'Aosta's most devoted landscapists.



**Karl Anneler (1886-1957)**

*The Wetterhorn, Grindelwald, Berner Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 13¾ x 18in. (35 x 46cm.)  
signed circa 1920

Although Anneler trained as a decorative painter for theatre companies in both his native Bern and then in Munich, by 1910 he had established himself as an independent landscape and portrait painter. He lived in the Lötschental Valley for nearly twenty years where he specialized in landscapes of the Berner Oberland and recording traditional genre scenes from village life, specifically, weddings and processions. Despite the increase in the number of homes built today, thanks to strict building regulations in Grindelwald such views as shown here of chalets with the Wetterhorn as a backdrop are still common. Anneler's work is represented in the Swiss Alpine Museum in Bern.



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

*The Barre des Ecrins seen from above the Glacier Blanc, Massif des Ecrins, France.*

oil on canvas, 18 x 22in. (46 x 56cm.)  
signed

The mountains that form the Massif des Ecrins rear up in the western French Alps, in a region known as the Dauphiné. Contencin returned to the area many times during his painting and climbing career and the Ecrins's peaks still offer some spectacular climbing with a lighter footfall of visitors in the late summer season. The Glacier Blanc tumbles off the north-east face of the highest mountain in the Dauphiné, the Barre des Ecrins (4102m), and extends for over three miles down into the Pelvoux Valley.

Adolphe Braun began experimenting with a camera in 1851 and by 1857 had established a fine art publishing firm. Such was its output and commercial success that Braun et Cie. would ultimately eclipse the remarkable contribution that its founder had made to the emerging photographic scene of the mid-nineteenth century. It was only in the mid-1960s that Braun's photographs and talents as a major innovator in the medium came to be appreciated, and, in particular, the role he played in publicizing the beauty of the Alps through his large-format prints.

Born in Besançon, Braun went to Paris in 1828 to apprentice in decoration and textiles. After a series of failed ventures based on floral design, in 1842 together with his brother, Charles, he published a successful collection of flower patterns. The sudden death of his young wife left Braun with three children to fend for and he returned east to Mulhouse in Alsace to work for the well-known Dollfus-Ausset studio. (The owner of the business, Daniel Dollfus-Ausset was also a keen geologist who became the backer for the Bisson Frères expedition to take the first photograph from the summit of Mont Blanc in July 1861. On the same day as the *Ascension artistique* or the *Première ascension photographique au sommet du Mont Blanc* it transpired that Gabriel Loppé first climbed the mountain too).

At the start of the 1850s Braun had begun incorporating photographs of flowers into his designs and his 1855 album, *Fleurs photographiées*, a collection of 300 photographs, was displayed at that year's Exposition Universelle in Paris. Thereafter Braun became a professional photographer developing an interest in cityscapes and landscape too. A few years after Braun had commercialized his activities, the studio of Maison Braun et Cie. was operating in a factory-like manner, producing all of its own materials except paper and created thousands of images, often in stereoscopic format, of the French, German, Swiss and Italian Alpine regions. Braun also produced many large-format panoramic images of the Alpine countryside.

In the mid-1860s, Braun invested in a new carbon print method which used a pigmented gelatin within a nitrocellulose plastic solution for the transfer process. Known as the 'Swan method', it was developed and patented by the English chemist, Joseph Wilson Swan (1828-1914). The process could produce images of very high quality and in a variety of tints such as sepia, yellow, red and even blue. The photographs were exceptionally resistant to waning and other deterioration in response to concerns about the fading of early types of silver-based prints which was already an issue within a few years of their introduction. The priority became the longevity of the finished product- a hallmark of Maison Braun's photographs.

Braun also used the new carbon print method to produce photographs of well-known works paintings and sculptures in the Louvre, the Vatican, and Vienna's Albertina. After his death in 1877, his sons, Gaston and Fernand continued operating Braun et Cie into the 20th century.

Although many of Braun's Alpine photographs were taken in large format, 40 x 50cm and up to, in rare instances, 100 x 150cm, from the 1860s onwards, the papers used were remarkably thin and delicate. The photographs appear unblemished and smooth with no bumps and imperfections which gives them a timeless appeal to museums and private collectors.

As an Alsatian, equally at home in Germany as well as France, and as a result in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, Braun's photographs have an international aspect to them. Some recent exhibitions devoted to Alpine photography in France and Switzerland have also shown that Braun et Cie. relied on enormous amounts of equipment and thereby teamwork to pull off their striking photographs which surpassed any of those taken by their contemporary mountaineers who wielded relatively rudimentary cameras themselves.



*Views in and around St. Moritz, Engadine, Switzerland.*

albumen prints - each 9½ x 11¾in (24 x 30cm)

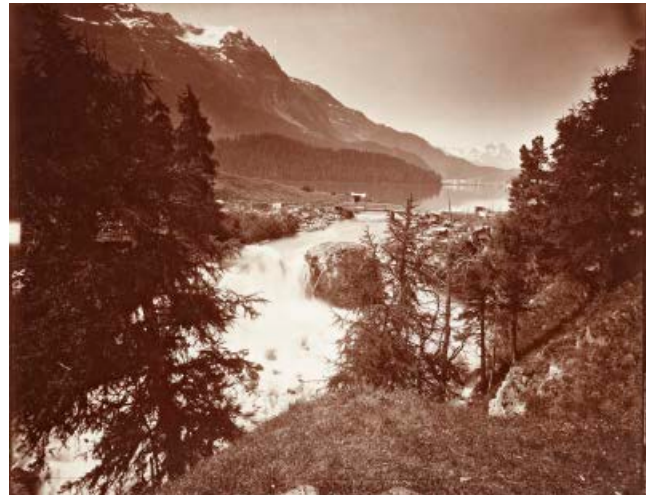
inventory numbers and handwritten annotations on verso.

circa 1865-1875





*The Innfall, St. Moritz*



*St. Moritz*



*The Eiger and Mönch seen from Wengernalp, Berner Oberland, Switzerland*  
carbon print, 25½ x 32in. (65 x 81cm.)  
signed and numbered 319 on the verso, circa 1885



*The Wetterhorn seen from Grindelwald, Berner Oberland, Switzerland*  
carbon print, 16¼ x 20in. (41 x 51cm.)  
signed and numbered 313 on the verso, circa 1885



*The Fex Valley, Sils im Engadin*



*Pontresina*



**Davide da Casalino,  
detto il Boscaiolo  
(b.1950)**

*Sassolungo in late  
winter, Val Gardena,  
Dolomites, Italy.*

photograph printed  
on bespoke sized  
cotton rag paper,  
taken with a Sony  
A7 camera with  
Zeiss Loxia lens

A lifetime of ski-touring, often in the less frequented areas of the Alps, has given this Anglo-Italian resident a veritable treasure trove of remarkable photographs. When not in the Italian Alps, either in the Dolomites or the Valsesia Valley, il Boscaiolo spends his summers in the Appenine mountains.



**Davide da Casalino,  
detto il Boscaiolo  
(b.1950)**

*Scotoni in late  
winter, Alta Badia,  
Dolomites, Italy.*

photograph printed  
on bespoke sized  
cotton rag paper,  
taken with a Sony  
A7 camera with  
Zeiss Loxia lens

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