

Peaks &
Glaciers®
2022

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

Peaks & Glaciers®

2022

Exhibition Catalogue

All paintings, drawings and photographs are for sale
and are available for viewing from Monday to Friday
by prior appointment at:

John Mitchell Fine Paintings
17 Avery Row
Brook Street
London W1K 4BF

Catalogue compiled and written by William Mitchell.

william@johnmitchell.net
+ 44 (0)207 493 7567

www.johnmitchell.net

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Fig. 1. William Mitchell (left) and James Hart Dyke climbing the west ridge of the Barre des Écrins, September 2021.

In the catalogue for last year's *Peaks & Glaciers*, our twentieth, I remarked how the pandemic had prevented many people from visiting the Alps and speculated that the collection of pictures on offer might ease, or distract from, that inconvenience. Despite fewer visitors to the gallery, there was in fact strong interest from our loyal and long-standing clients as well as from many new collectors. The exhibition was another reminder of how much the Alps can engage our thoughts - in all seasons- whether as climber, skier, walker or *rêveur*. Indeed, dreams are some of the greatest returns on the investment of time spent in the mountains. Unaware that yet another winter season would be thwarted, I alluded to that same fact in a talk which was hosted in Chamonix's roomy Le Majestic last September. At the 'round table' evening, entitled *Loppé et le mont Blanc*, I spoke of the painter, a virtuoso of these exhibitions, as a creator of memories and how his Alpine scenery would grace the walls of his fellow climbers back in Victorian London. I suggested that in their owners' twilight years and in a largely pre-photographic age, these pictures would have awarded the best possible recollections of days spent in or above the Alpine valleys.

Staying with the power of dreams, last year a notable French mountaineer and guide was asked to provide the foreword to a wonderful book published in Chamonix to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the legendary *Compagnie des Guides*. Writing poignantly, the veteran climber recounts that soon after the mountains and towns went into lockdown, he dreamt one night that he was heading out with clients in tow and up onto the glaciers. And yet, in this instance, all the lifts and pylons had disappeared. The group kept going in spite of the anomaly and, over the coming days, went on to experience and savour a slowing down, an immersion.

For a fleeting moment, engrossed in the mountains and all alone, they felt like mountaineers from another century, and it may well be that many of the paintings and photographs presented here, especially the earlier ones, can have the same effect on us.

The notion of the Alps devoid of any infrastructure is indeed thought provoking. Over the last two years, and within the context of last autumn's climate summit, there has been a sharp rise in the number of articles and documentary films focusing on retreating glaciers and the temperature variations in the Alps. With less reliable seasonal snowfall and unstable rock in the summer, there is no doubt that in a post-pandemic era, Alpine communities, especially ski resorts, will face substantial challenges in both sustainability terms and the use of natural resources. It is not, therefore,

impossible to imagine a time when skiing and climbing become more centered on the sense of immersion in the mountain, or better put in French, *l'engagement*.

In the autumn I was lucky enough to put together a short painting expedition to the Alps with James Hart Dyke (see pp 36-39 and fig. 1). The conditions were cold but clear, and it was a privilege to watch James working at different times of the day. On a crisp -15 Celsius morning, the first sunlight to hit the glaciers felt even stronger as we sat huddled around him in the snow at 3,500 metres. Up on the summits, there was a pang of guilt as we lay in the sun nibbling nuts and chocolate whilst James, uncomplaining as ever, made his sketches, squinting into the distance and surrounded by peaks at all points of the compass.

Such rewarding 'fieldwork' was the ideal time to contemplate the legacies of some of James's forebears, notably Loppé and his successor, Contencin, whose work today can bring considerable sums at auction. Some of his finest pictures now sell for the price of a respectable seventeenth-century Dutch Old Master and in view of Contencin's increasing profile a more thorough exhibition ought to be dedicated to this *peintre-alpiniste*.

Peaks & Glaciers relies upon a traditional group of mountain painters as its foundation, but I am always on the lookout for the best pictures by the lesser-known painters. This year, for example, I am pleased to have a few pictures for sale by the Italian painter, Angelo Abrate (see pp 7, 15, 30) who was first and foremost a recognized mountaineer before he turned to painting. Adolphe Braun's groundbreaking photographs of the Bernese Oberland are another highlight worth mentioning (see pp 46-47).

Thanks to my expanding box of maps, Google Earth and a small team of guides and topography boffins, a lot of effort has gone into getting the locations and viewpoints precise. As stated before, the aim of the short write-up that goes with most illustrations is to offer some of that topographical insight and a brief biographical context.

To end, I would like to thank my colleague James Astley Birtwistle for putting together another *Peaks & Glaciers*. Behind the scenes, and with great patience, he has helped source the pictures, track down the shipments, tackle the often variable framing requests and all the technical aspects which remain the unclimbed peak for some of us.



Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)

Cliffs near Seelisberg, Lake Luzern, Switzerland

oil on paper, 32 x 40cm.

signed and inscribed on the verso: *A mon ami Eugène Felix souvenir affectueux Calame*. Circa 1861

LITERATURE

V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.453, no.762

This fine study in oils comes from the studio sale of the artist's works held a year after Calame's death in Paris's Hôtel Drouot. The sale was conducted over two days and included 650 lots, mostly oil studies with two hundred or so drawings. It bears repeating that Calame never sold his studies and drawings in his lifetime and the rediscovery of this daring and modern sketch reveals to what extent he was devoted to working *en plein air*. In this instance, perched high up above Lake Luzern the painter was even risking life and limb. Defying the elements, the trees growing at the edge of the cliffs – one dead and one alive – correspond to Calame's vision of man's place in the world, dwarfed here by the twin peaks of the Mythen in the far distance to right. This composition is similar in style and execution to his vertiginous view of cliffs entitled *Falaises de Seelisberg* from 1861 now in the Oskar Reinhart Sammlung in Winterthur (see fig. 2). The latter oil study was one of the highlights of the 1993 exhibition held in the National Gallery, *Caspar David Friedrich to Ferdinand Hodler: A Romantic Tradition Nineteenth-Century Paintings and Drawings from the Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur*. It was here that this writer first encountered Calame's pictures, and especially the Seelisberg scene.



Fig. 2. *Falaises de Seelisberg*, oil on canvas on card, 32 x 52cm. The Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur, Switzerland.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

Dawn on the Rochers de Fiz seen from Vaudagne Les Houches near Chamonix, France.

oil on canvas, 46 x 65cm.
signed and inscribed on verso: *Lever de soleil sur les rochers de Fiz*

This wintry landscape was painted looking due north from near Les Houches in the Chamonix valley. Contencin caught the first rays of sunshine saturating the Pointe de Platé which is on the western end of the peaks known as the Rochers de Fiz. The Prussian blue hues are strongest in the wooded lower slopes to the right of the composition which, with a double 'v' shape and a layer of mist, creates a sense of distance across valley and the town of Servoz far below.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

The Vispa river in winter, Zermatt, Valais, Switzerland

oil on canvas, 46 x 55cm.
signed



As a traditional landscape painter Jansen was an archetypical product of the Düsseldorf School of painting but also one of the more successful ones. Although Jansen was born in Aachen, by the age of 17 he was enrolled in Germany's leading school of landscape painting which had developed in the wake of the German Romantic movement.

Like his now better-known contemporaries such as Andreas Achenbach, Carl Friedrich Lessing, Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, and Albert Bierstadt, Jansen was drawn to the Alps from an early age. With the emphasis

on fine detail and pictorial accuracy, the Düsseldorf landscapists tended to have a more subdued palette which was ideally suited to painting large format pictures such as this imposing panorama of St.-Martin-sur-Arve near Sallanches. In this instance the shadowy riverbed is in sharp contrast with the vast west face of Mont Blanc and its sentinel peaks bathed in such strong sunlight.

The historic stone bridge has spanned the Arve since 1783 and has recently been saved from ruin thanks to a restoration project undertaken by the Haute-Savoie.

Joseph Jansen (1829-1905)

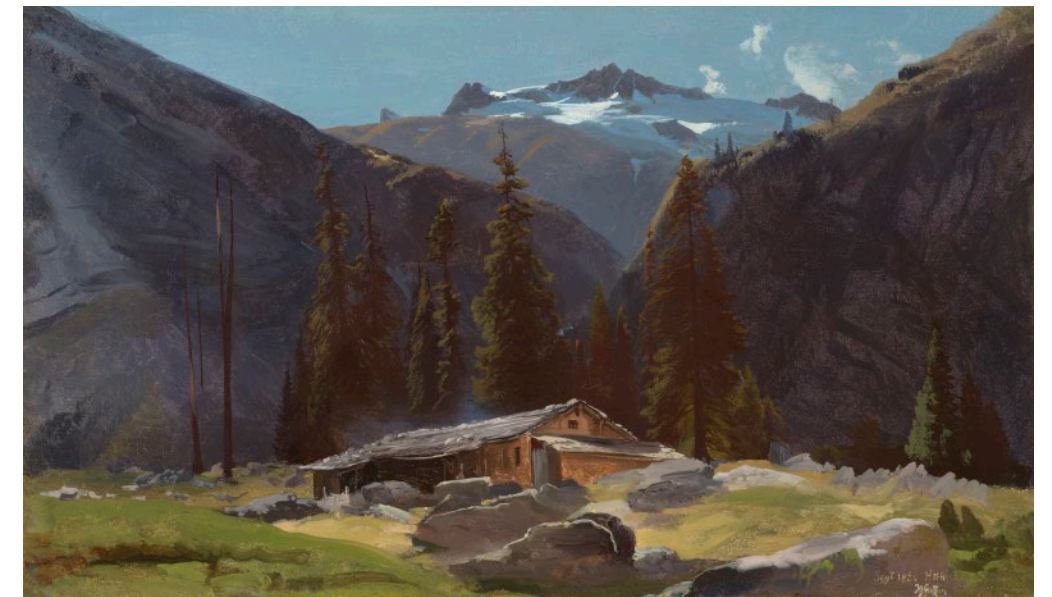
The Mont Blanc massif seen from St.-Martin-Sallanches, Savoie, France

oil on canvas, 139.5 x 188cm.
signed

Johann Gottfried Steffan (1815-1905)

The Handeck Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland

oil on paper on canvas, 25.5 x 45cm.
signed and dated 1850



The hamlet of Handeck near the Gelmersee and its secluded, heavily wooded valleys were some of Calame's favourite places to paint every summer and occasionally in winter. His pupils and admirers such as Steffan would follow suit and he too made many painting excursions in the area. This *plein-air* oil study was made looking due west up to the Steinlauhorn.

Carl Kessler (1876-1968)*Winter in the Klosters Valley,
Graubunden, Switzerland*watercolour, 58 x 79cm.
signed

Looking along the Klosters valley from the side of the Gostchna above Serneus Bad, the Wisshorn and Canardhorn rear up in the background. 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.





Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)

Souvenir of Lake Luzern, Switzerland

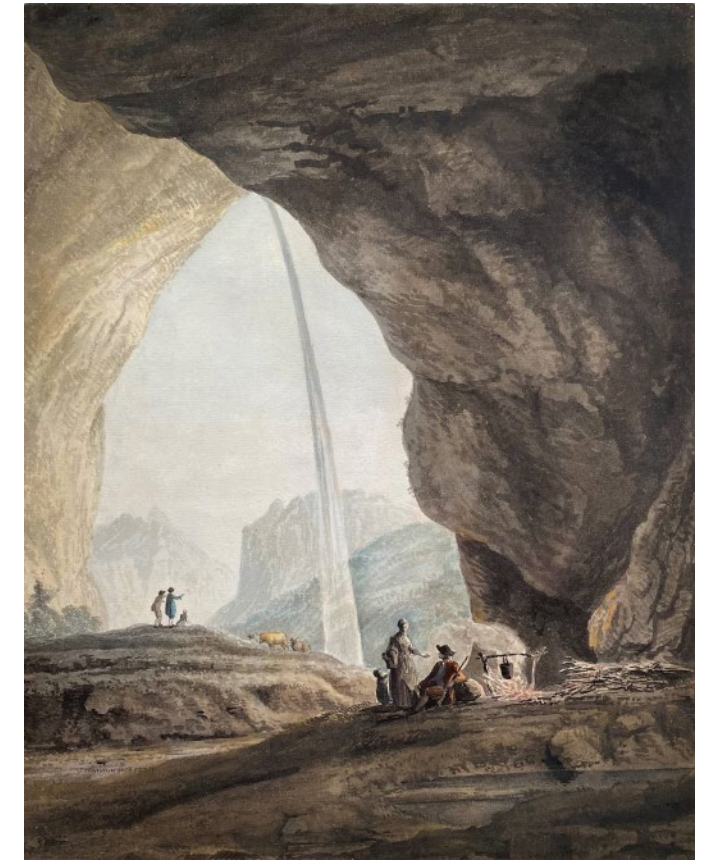
oil on canvas, 51.1 x 42.5cm.
signed. Circa 1862

PROVENANCE
Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York.

EXHIBITED
Forest, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscapes from the Lunde Collection, The National Gallery, London, June 22-September 18 2011, no.46
The Rockies and the Alps Bierstadt, Calame and the Romance of the Mountains, Newark Museum, New Jersey, USA, March 24- August 19 2011, pp.56-7, no. 20

LITERATURE
V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.381, no.359

This majestic studio painting demonstrates why Calame became so well known throughout Europe and - further afield in America and Russia - during his lifetime. It is a proclamation of a pristine landscape, showcasing Switzerland and the lake which was at the heart of much of the nation's history. The picture also reveals a great depth of composition behind the stand of birch trees which dwarf the mother and child most likely returning home from the shores of the lake. Indeed, figures were a relative rarity in Calame's pictures as his trees often took on an anthropomorphic role in defying the elements. Directly behind them is the tiniest speck of paint - a sailing boat on the furthest shore. Calame's title, *Souvenir* is also significant as, technically, it meant a 'recollection' worked up from studies made on the spot. It features a great deal in Corot's paintings but, more significantly, Calame's friend, the French Romantic poet Alphonse de Lamartine often used the term *souvenir* in his work. Lamartine even devoted a poem to him entitled: *Le Mont Blanc. Sur un paysage de M. Calame.* Formal and important Calame paintings of this calibre, and in outstanding condition, are now hard to come across.



Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733-1794)

The Valley of Haslital, Berner Oberland, Switzerland.

watercolour, 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.



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

Winter in the Meiringen Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
oil on canvas, 30 x 40cm.
signed and dated 1866

Loppé first encountered the *haute-montagne* when on a summer painting school in Meiringen, twenty years before he painted this wintry scene of a hunter and his dog by the Aare River. As the portal to the high Alps of the Bernese Oberland, the village remained a special place for Loppé, who returned there most years as if on a pilgrimage.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

A 'baita' near Tête de la Tronche, Val d'Aosta, Italy
oil on panel, 24 x 34cm.
signed and dated on verso 1945

This beautiful view of the Dent du Géant and the Arête Rochefort with a hut, known locally in the Val d'Aosta as a *baita*, is a perfect example of Abrate's sketches made *en plein air*. The sun beats down on the surrounding snowfields and using passages of violet on the logs in the foreground and the reddish beams in the hut's roof, Abrate cleverly conveyed the midday heat. The mountainscape effectively depicts his 'backyard' as Abrate made many fine ascents of the peaks seen on the ridge, including a full traverse from east to west in the 1920s.



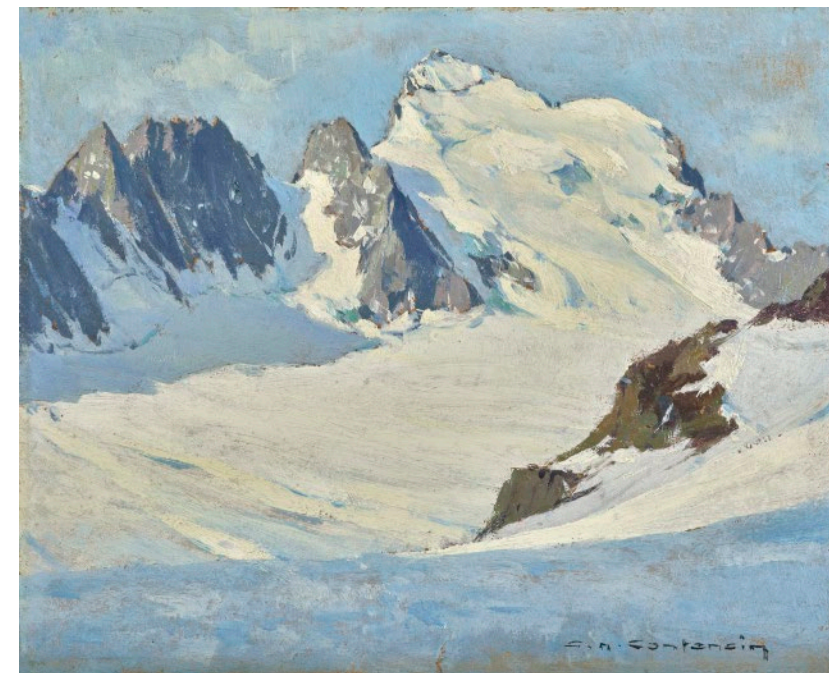
Marcus Jacobi (1891-1969)
The Niesen, Lake Thun, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
 oil on canvas, 105 x 96cm.
 signed and dated 1941

Born in Biel, Jacobi came from a family of piano manufacturers and went to study medicine in Bern before becoming a painter. In the 1920s he moved to Merligen on the northern shore of Lake Thun from where this summer panorama was painted. Floating between Hodler and Vallotton, two of the giants of Swiss twentieth century painting, Jacobi's landscape style fused elements of Realism and Symbolism. He became known for his views of the Niesen, the volcano-like peak which rises to well over 2,000 metres and is one of Switzerland's most iconic mountains.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)
Winter in Wengen, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
 oil on panel, 46 x 60cm.
 signed

The painter's inventive motif of ski or sledge tracks comes into its own in this beautiful scene painted above Wengen. Using the three diagonal elements formed by, firstly, the chalets, then the dark line of trees and behind the flank of the Jungfrau, Contencin could cut the view in half pictorially; conjuring the sense of a vast void beyond before one's eye alights on the rocky wall across the valley. This painting is complex but highly successful and one where the painter has favoured using the wooden panel's 'ground' as a colour intermittently. However, as is often the case in Contencin's pictures, the confident handling of the deep snow in the broad foreground is the key to the composition's success.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)
The Barre des Ecrins, Dauphiné, France
 oil on panel, 22 x 27cm.
 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.



The Grandes Jorasses seen from the Couvercle Hut, Chamonix, France

oil on canvas, 50 x 65cm.
signed

The view towards the Grandes Jorasses across the Mer de Glace must rank as one of the best panoramas in the Alps. At just under 2,700 metres the location of the Couvercle Hut 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 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.

The extent to which Contencin could represent the strength of a dazzling midday sun in this canvas is remarkable. Far below, the glacier is made up of flat passages of the palette knife with small flecks of darker blue at the edge representing the seracs.

The scattered clouds high above the wall of the Grandes Jorasses appear to be almost moving across the sky and this is an outstanding example of a mountaineer's picture; a true endorsement of a *peintre-alpiniste* accustomed to working in the thinner air with little shelter from the elements.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

Hamlet above Sils im Engadin, Graubunden, Switzerland

oil on canvas, 46 x 55cm.
signed



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

The Lac d'Annecy in winter, Savoie, France

oil on board, 37.5 x 49.5cm.
signed and dated: 6.1.1873

Given the role that Chamonix, London and then Paris played in Loppé's life it is tempting to overlook that he lived in Annecy from 1850 to 1862. He married his first wife there, started a family and set about establishing himself as an *artiste-peintre* whilst exploring the shores of the lake and its surrounding hills. His fascination and aptitude for depicting snow and ice can be traced back to those first winters in Annecy. At the time, many of his sketches were annotated as '*impressions de neige*' or 'snow effects'. Contrary to the prevailing view that Gustave Courbet was one of the first painters of his time to focus on '*effets de neige*' during the exceptionally cold winters of the early 1860s in the Franche-Comté, it was, in fact, Loppé who had begun experimenting with frozen scenes nearly a decade earlier. His palette and affinity for snow's textures prefigured all the glacier pictures he went on to paint even if he continued to produce these sparse and atmospheric views of the Lac d'Annecy, and the Brienzer See too, for a few decades to come.

Carl Kessler (1876-1968)

Looking towards Davos from above Klosters, Graubunden, Switzerland
 watercolour, 38.5 x 57cm.
 signed

Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

Chalets above Megève, Savoie, France
 oil on card, 24 x 33cm.
 signed



The Aiguille du Midi is on the far left of this composition which depicts the whole chain of Mont Blanc seen from near the Croix des Salles above Megève.



La Meije seen from Lac du Pontet, Dauphiné, France

oil on panel, 46 x 61 cm.
signed

At 3,983 metres the jagged and imposing Meije is the second highest mountain in the Dauphiné after the Barre des Ecrins. Less renowned than the Eiger but La Meije shares the same quandary as neither peak makes it into the hallowed anthology of '4,000ers' by a few tens of metres. Nonetheless, there are many fine climbing routes on La Meije and the full traverse of its numerous summits ranks as one of the great classics in the Alps. The mountain overlooks the small resort of La Grave which offers some of the best off-piste skiing available in what remains a relatively wild and empty area, with few ski lifts or roads.

Contencin visited the Massif des Ecrins and the valleys around La Grave frequently. In this fine homage to La Meije seen from the Lac du Pontet, the steep valley below is shrouded in mist contrasting with strong sunlight hitting the snowfields on the mountain's higher flanks.



In all its wintry splendour, this is a beautiful and serene view of the Jungfrau painted from Wengernalp. It appears that Contencin worked from up on this plateau many times and in all seasons. The fact that it was relatively accessible in the 1920s and 1930s via the railway could explain the number of Jungfrau paintings by Contencin one comes across, but it may well be this was simply one of his favourite mountainscapes to paint.

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 Bernese 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.

Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

Wengernalp: the Jungfrau in winter, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 56 x 100cm.
signed



Carl Kessler (1876-1968)

A winter evening in Klosters, Graubunden, Switzerland

watercolour, 34.5 x 49cm.
signed

Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

Crevasse below the Grands Mulets Glacier, Chamonix, France
oil on canvas, 40 x 30cm.
signed

From a faded old label on the picture stretcher giving an address at 12, Kings Bench Walk, it has been established that this hitherto lost crevasse painting, together with the *Sunset on Le Buet* (see p. 34), belonged to Loppé's great friend and climbing partner, Sir Alfred Wills. The two men first met in Chamonix in the early 1860s and became firm friends. Thanks to Wills, Loppé was made the first foreign member of the Alpine Club and as a result began exhibiting his pictures there. Both studies in this year's catalogue were shown in London in 1878 and this *Bossons* picture was most likely hung next to its gigantic offspring, the four-metre canvas which now hangs rather incongruously in a conference room in Chamonix's Le Majestic (see fig 3). As one of Loppé's most famous and certainly most ambitious compositions, it was the

star attraction of the town's Musée Alpin collection until the terrible fire ravaged the building in 1999, destroying more than forty of his works. It is worth noting that Loppé included the climbers and their ladder in the finished picture to create scale or indicate the size of the enormous serac jutting off the glacier. And this is doubtless why he chose to paint the Aiguille du Midi in the background.

Since the lifespan of such advanced ice shelves as shown here is brief, one of the most valuable consequences of finding these two studies, in particular *Crevasse below the Grands Mulets*, is the further validity they give to Loppé's legacy as a *peintre-alpiniste* who worked from the motif at all times.



Fig. 3.
William Mitchell next to *Crevasse au dessous des Grands Mulets. L'Ascension au mont Blanc*, oil on canvas, 400 x 300cm.
1875-1883. Les Amis du Vieux Chamonix.





Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

Winter in Entrèves near Courmayeur, Val d'Aosta, Italy

oil on canvas, 70 x 100cm.
signed and dated 1949

In 1942 the C.A.I. (the Italian Alpine Club) held a winter exhibition of Abrate's pictures. Reviews of the exhibition portrayed him as always having 'one hand on his ice-axe' and extolled his unusual ability to paint above 3,000 metres. Born in Turin, Abrate was, in fact, an acknowledged and accomplished climber before the C.A.I.'s exhibition. He had joined the club in 1923 as well as the French Alpine Club a few years later making his mark in several notable climbs in the Mont Blanc region. He is best known for his first ascent in July 1923 of the south-west ridge of the Aiguille de Leschaux (3370m) made with two fellow Piedmontese alpinists.

Abrate was a self-taught artist who like his contemporary and mentor, the Italian mountain painter, Cesare Maggi, established himself in the tradition of the *peintres-alpinistes*. The first exhibitions of his pictures were held in Turin in the mid- 1920s and were successful enough to encourage Abrate to show his work in Paris several years later in 1936 and 1937. Reviews of his Paris exhibitions focussed on his aptitude for painting snow in sub-zero conditions.

In the same manner as Gabriel Loppé a generation before, Abrate would force his climbing companions to loiter around whilst taking advantage of what he deemed the ideal conditions to paint in, regardless of the altitude and temperature. Abrate kept his painting kit to the minimum by using a specially constructed aluminium paint box strapped to his thigh. Putting his feet inside his rucksack and propping the open box on his knees, he could make rapid sketches using a palette knife to block in colours. In 1954 the art critic Joseph Budin wrote in *Le Patriote* about Abrate capturing the essence of high-altitude scenes, in particular his treatment of glaciers and crevasses: 'He sees the mountain as a climber would before looking at it from a painter's perspective and transmits his vision onto canvas with a masterly touch and finesse. In his studies, one feels the breeze and poetry from the summits, the purity of the air and the limpid light. His canvases diffuse a solemn silence.'

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Abrate moved to Sallanches below Chamonix and built a studio from where he made countless painting trips into the Mont Blanc massif. At some stage Abrate became a French citizen and subsequently divided his time between the Chamonix valleys and the Val d'Aosta where his pictures were much sought after, especially in Courmayeur. He painted almost continuously until the late 1970s and exhibited his pictures in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Turin, Milan, Bologna, Aosta and Zermatt.

In 1975, Turin's Galleria Fogliato put on a retrospective exhibition of more than one hundred of his paintings entitled: *Cinquant'anni di pittura di Angelo Abrate* ('Fifty years of Angelo Abrate's paintings'). Apart from consolidating his reputation as one of the leading mountain painters of his generation, the opportunity to see such a body of work all together also proved to what extent Abrate was a mountaineer's painter, through and through.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)
Summer in Findeln, Zermatt, Switzerland
 oil on panel, 33 x 55cm.
 signed

For many generations, the group of hamlets known as Findeln, was the summer home of Zermatt families who grazed their cattle, grew crops, and made hay on the sunny south facing slopes of the Sunnegga and Rothorn mountains, 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 unsparring and until the early twentieth century the way of life changed little. Today these small shelters and grain stores and the tiny chapel of Ze Gassen, visible in the foreground, have their own charisma as remnants of the 'unspoilt' Alps. A smaller version of this view towards the Matterhorn is on p. 41.



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)
The Gsteig bei Gstaad Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
 oil on canvas laid on board, 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 Arpelstock 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.

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.

Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

Sunset on mont Blanc seen from le Buet, Chamonix, France

oil on canvas, 30 x 40cm.

signed

Made on top of Le Buet, facing Mont Blanc, Loppé used this sketch to paint an enormous canvas which now hangs in Chamonix's Le Majestic (see fig 4). At two and a half metres wide, *Coucher de soleil sur la chaîne de Mont Blanc* is a splurge of smouldering orange, red and dark shadows. When comparing the study with its large counterpart, it shows how adept Loppé was at transposing the effect of the setting sun; the strength of the shadows and the colours' values even on such a small scale. His topographical accuracy was as precise as ever.



Fig. 4. *Coucher de soleil sur la chaîne de Mont Blanc*, oil on canvas, 185 x 240cm. Les Amis du Vieux Chamonix.





James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

The Barre des Ecrins

oil and acrylic on canvas, 160 x 160cm.
signed and dated 2021



James Hart Dyke (b.1965)

Wildhorn and Spitzhorn, Gstaad, Switzerland - a panorama

oil on canvas, 100 x 130 cm.
signed and dated 2016



James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

Above the Glacier Blanc

oil and acrylic on paper, 30 x 50cm.
signed and dated 2021



James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

Mont Blanc seen from the summit of the Barre des Ecrins

oil and acrylic, 30 x 42cm.
signed and dated 2021



James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

Mont Blanc

oil and acrylic, 160 x 240cm.
signed and dated 2021



James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

First light on the Barre des Ecrins

acrylic and pencil on paper, 20 x 30cm.
signed and dated 2021



James Hart Dyke (b.1966)

The Barre des Ecrins - sketch

acrylic and pencil, 30 x 20cm.
signed. 2021



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, 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 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

saturation of 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)

Summer in Findeln, Zermatt, Switzerland

oil on panel, 19 x 27cm.

signed



Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)

Morschach, Lake Luzern, Switzerland

oil on canvas laid on cardboard, 38.4 x 26.4 cm.
c. 1861

PROVENANCE

Zürich, Galerie Koller, 17 November 1994, lot 3064
Asbjørn Lunde (1927-2017), New York.

EXHIBITION

Alpine Views: Alexandre Calame and the Swiss Landscape,
Williamstown, Clark Art Institute, 2006, no. 14, repr. p. 61;
*Den ville natur. Sveitisk og norsk romantikk. Malerier fra Asbjørn
Lundes samling*, New York, Tromsø, Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum
and Bergen Billedgalleri, 2007-8, no. 16, repr. p. 86;
*Forests, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscapes from
the Lunde Collection*, London, National Gallery, 2011, no. 38,
repr. p. 68

Until 2021 this enthralling oil sketch, formerly in the Asbjørn Lunde Collection in New York, was thought to be painted in Seelisberg (see p. 4) but it has now been identified as a view seen from the opposite side of the lake above Morschach. I am grateful to Dr. Geri Reinecke's help in locating the exact viewpoint. As Reinecke has pointed out from comparable photographs, apart from a road which now runs beside the lake towards the famous Tellskapelle, this scene has changed remarkably little since Calame's time. Together with Seelisberg and Isenfluh above the Lauterbrunnen Valley, these were hallowed places for the artist and are justifiably some of the most beautiful spots in Switzerland.



Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)

After the storm: Grimsel Pass, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland

oil on canvas, 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. Dateable to 1840, this beautiful early work was once only known of from a lithograph and comes close to being Calame at his best. 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.



Hans Maurus (1901-1942)

The Matterhorn seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Valais, Switzerland

oil on canvas, 60.5 x 80.5cm.
signed

Cesare Maggi (1881-1961)

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

oil on panel, 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.

Adolphe Braun (1812-1877) and the Maison Braun et Cie.

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 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.



The Wetterhorn as seen from Grindelwald, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
signed and numbered 741 on the verso, circa 1870



A man sketching in Mürren, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 684 on the verso, circa 1870



The Wengernalp, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 761 on the verso, circa 1870



The Eiger, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 747 on the verso, circa 1870



The Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 680 on the verso, circa 1870



The Lauterbrunnen Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 681 on the verso, circa 1870



The Jungfrau, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland
carbon print, 24 x30cm.
numbered 762 on the verso, circa 1870



**Emanuel Gyger
(1886-1951)**

*St. Luc Val
d'Anniviers,
Valais,
Switzerland.*

silver gelatin
print, 18 x 28cm.
signed and
inscribed with
location. 1939



**Emanuel Gyger
(1886-1951)**

*Saas Fee, Valais,
Switzerland.*

silver gelatin
print, 18 x 28cm.
signed and
inscribed with
location.

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William Mitchell william@johnmitchell.net

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JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

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17 Avery Row, Brook Street,
London W1K 4BF
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7493 7567
www.johnmitchell.net