

Peaks &  
Glaciers®  
2023

JOHN MITCHELL  
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

A. ABRATE  
1945



# Peaks & Glaciers®

2023

## 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](mailto:william@johnmitchell.net)  
+ 44 (0)207 493 7567

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

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Towards the end of last year, as I was turning my attention to my annual exhibition of paintings and drawings of the Alps, I had the honour of being asked by the Alpine Club to be their Keeper of Pictures. I was delighted to accept, not least because I had for some time wanted to give something back to that venerable institution. As the spiritual home of climbing as an activity we still recognize today, the Club remains at the forefront of the mountaineering world even if in its earliest days its principal sphere of interest was restricted to the Alps. Many readers and followers of *Peaks & Glaciers* will be familiar with the fact that the exhibition, now in its twenty-second edition, began with a loan display of various treasures from the Alpine Club's collection. I picked the Club's splendid painting of sunrise on Mont Blanc by **Gabriel Loppé** for the cover of the catalogue as it is one of their most impressive pictures and it seemed the finest mission statement for *Peaks & Glaciers* I could imagine. Ever since then I have sought out Loppé's paintings and anything else I could find out about him. When I wrote and published my book on Loppé in 2018, I already knew that his pictures were becoming harder to find and therefore the project to bring his life and work to a wider and more appreciative audience seemed long overdue.

In mid-December, I came back from opening a marvellous exhibition dedicated to Gabriel Loppé on view at the Forte di Bard Museum in the Val d'Aosta, Italy (see photo below, fig.1). It was the second Loppé exhibition to open in 2022, the first was in Courmayeur and put on in the Skyway Montebianco cablecar station -a first of its kind in many aspects. As I was closing the gallery just before Christmas, I put the Forte di Bard catalogue in the bookcase dedicated to *Peaks & Glaciers* catalogues, monographs and generally, mountain books. Seeing the books lined up, I realized that it was the sixth publication about Loppé since 1998 when the painter had been declared all but forgotten in the Grenoble exhibition entitled the *Sentiment de la Montagne*.

It seemed the perfect way to end a year in which I had devoted an enormous amount of time and energy to a long-held endeavour, namely, to take a painter to the top of Mont Blanc to paint from the summit. This was to be the ultimate homage to Loppé. In July 2022 we were able to do just that: together with three faithful guides, a group of us left early one morning from under a stand of trees in Loppé's former garden in Chamonix. We went up to the Grands Mulets refuge to climb Mont Blanc via the original route. Over a magical hour and a half we watched the specialist mountain



Fig. 1. The Forte di Bard Museum.

painter James Hart Dyke recreate the two sunset pictures that Loppé painted on the summit in August 1873. We left the top just before 10 p.m and returned to the Grands Mulets Hut through the night (see fig. 3 & 4).

From September 27th to October 8th we will put on an exhibition all about the expedition at Cromwell Place, a dedicated venue in London's South Kensington. Here *James Hart Dyke Mont Blanc: The Summit Paintings* promises to tell a remarkable story of reverence, perseverance and camaraderie through James's paintings and sketches. The other and arguably more poignant subject to be addressed will be the extraordinary difference between the volume of ice on Mont Blanc's glaciers in Loppé's lifetime and nowadays.

Although the disappearing glaciers are now a worrying reality, I believe these exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues continue to remind us, whether walker, skier or climber how much the Alps engage our thoughts. During these winter months, the media tends to highlight the ups and downs of the skiing season, namely the copious snowfalls followed by thaws and the inevitable deadly avalanches, but as far back as literature and accounts of climbing adventures go, there has never been any doubt that mountains are both dangerous and inhospitable. In the words of the Swiss mountaineer, André Roch, 'The avalanche does not know that you are an expert.' (see fig. 2) It is our activities and the accepted risk which can make them perilous. Nonetheless, again and again we are drawn back often up above the snowline as were many of the painters who feature annually in *Peaks & Glaciers*.

*Peaks & Glaciers* relies upon a traditional group of mountain painters as its foundation, these creators of memories, and yet I am always on the lookout for the best pictures by the lesser-known painters. This year, for example, I am pleased to have several mountain landscapes for sale by the Italian painter, **Angelo Abrate** (see pp. 6, 14, 24, 28, 30, 36) who was first and foremost a recognized mountaineer before he turned to painting. It is equally rewarding to be able to offer more views of the Val d'Aosta region and especially since I have been involved with the shows there last year. **Cesare Maggi's** magnificent Breuil-Cervinia panorama from 1925 (see pp. 16) has to be seen up close to appreciate its Divisionist technique to best effect: a plethora of impasto and bright colours.



Fig. 2. André Roch (1906-2002) K2 and Concordia, Pakistan, oil on canvas, 89 x 116cm. with John Mitchell Fine Paintings, 2023.

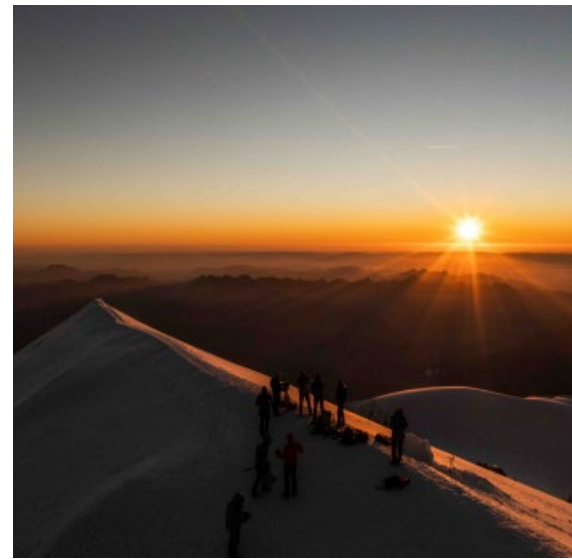


Fig. 3. Sunset on Mont Blanc, July 8th 2022. Photo by Pascal Tournaire.

When perusing the catalogue, it is worth remembering that many of the artists shown in *Peaks & Glaciers* were first and foremost commercial painters who relied on contracts with galleries and annual exhibitions at salons or societies to make a living. This explains why they perhaps had favourite locations or subject matters and rather than considering them as repetitions, it was more a case of supply and demand and, crucially, providing the means to allow them to keep climbing and living in the Alps.

As usual, a good deal of effort has gone into getting the locations and viewpoints precise, but I would welcome any amendments and better still, any 'now and then' photographs if available. 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.

I would like to thank my colleague James Astley Birtwistle for his assistance in putting together another *Peaks & Glaciers*. As ever, he has helped source the pictures, track down the shipments and tackle all the technical aspects which remain the unclimbed peak for some of us. The task is now even more challenging due to our misalignment with those countries with Alpine regions!

W.J. Mitchell

January 2023



Fig. 4. James Hart Dyke painting on the summit of Mont Blanc at 8 p.m., July 8th 2022. Photo by Pascal Tournaire.





### Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

*The Grandes Jorasses above the Val d'Aosta, Italy.*

oil on panel, 44 x 34 cm.

signed and dated 1945, inscribed on verso: *Verso la luce*  
(*Grandes Jorasses*)

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 state 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.

This view of the formidable end wall of the Grandes Jorasses was painted up on the Tronchey and de Praz-Sec Glaciers now, eighty years on, horrendously diminished in terms of volume and area by warming. It is indeed Abrate at his most *alpiniste* and a wonderful display of light and shadow on the glaciers and the south face of this 4,208-metre peak.



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

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

oil on panel, 54 x 73 cm.  
signed

In this pleasing view of the celebrated Matterhorn, the roofs of the huts and the east face of the mountain itself suggest a recent heavy snowfall that has begun to soften and thaw. 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 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 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.

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*.







**Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882-1964)**

*The Dom and Täschhorn, Valais, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 30.5 x 37.5 cm.

signed

Although Burger cannot be categorized as a Symbolist in the strictest sense, his palette, his penchant for jagged outlines and his ethereal skies owes much to Ferdinand Hodler, the leading Swiss painter of the late nineteenth century.

Wilhelm, or Willy, Burger is nowadays better known as a graphic artist and his lithograph posters such as, *Jungfraubahn. Station Jungfrau: Joch 3457 m. Aletschgletscher, 1914* and *St. Moritz, 1912* remain more costly than his oil paintings. However, he was a painter in oils by training who apprenticed in Zurich before leaving for Philadelphia and New York in 1908. He returned to Switzerland in 1913 and set up a studio in Rüslikon on the west shore of Lake Zürich from where he would travel throughout the Alps, the Mediterranean and as far afield as Egypt for his commissions.

This striking watercolour was made from the Rothorn mountains up above Zermatt.

To the left is the summit of the majestic Dom, Switzerland's highest mountain within its borders, flanked by the equally imposing Täschhorn. The grass on the slopes in the foreground, has turned tawny coloured from a summer's worth of sunshine.





The artist's inventive motif of tracks in the snow comes into its own in this beautiful scene painted from Mürren. The north faces of the Eiger and the Mönch dominate the horizon and the dark, unlit sides of the haylofts contrast and enhance the sense of distance across the valley. As is often the case in Contencin's pictures, the confident handling of the foreground here a sloping meadow under deep snow, is the key to both the composition's success and its visual appeal.





**Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)**

*Megève and Mont Blanc after a heavy snowfall, Savoie, France.*

oil on panel, 33 x 41 cm.  
signed

The afternoon shadows are beginning to lengthen in this beautiful wintry scene painted looking towards Mont Blanc from near Megève. The deep path leading to the chalets would suggest a large amount of fresh snow has recently fallen. By using passages of violet on the wooden sides of the chalets' walls and the small leafless tree in the foreground, Abrate elegantly conveyed the last rays of the sun. Abrate lived for many years in nearby Sallanches and in depicting what was effectively his 'backyard' here, he revealed a more lyrical side to his work. It reminds us that although designated a *peintre-alpiniste*, Abrate was first and foremost an artist.



**Cesare Maggi (1881-1961)**

*Il Lago Blu, Breuil-Cervinia, Val d'Aosta, Italy. (The Matterhorn seen from Cervinia)*

oil on canvas, 100 x 140 cm.  
signed, 1925

The oft photographed and visited Lago Blu lies at 1,980m in Italy's Aosta Valley. Under optimal conditions, il Cervino (the Matterhorn) is reflected in the lake. Nearly one hundred years on since Maggi painted this, the snow cap and the glacier on the mountain's long west flank has all but disappeared. Seen from the south side, the Matterhorn's sharp, pyramidal profile, nonetheless rivals the more famous view from Zermatt over the Theodule Pass.

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.







### Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)

*Cliffs near Seelisberg, Lake Luzern, Switzerland.*

oil on paper, 32 x 40 cm.

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 5). 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.



Fig. 5. *Falaises de Seelisberg*, oil on canvas on card, 32 x 52cm. The Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur, Switzerland.





**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

*Ringgenberg on Lake Brienz seen from Interlaken in winter, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 48 x 75 cm.

signed

Loppé first encountered the *haute-montagne* when on a summer painting school in Meiringen in 1846, over thirty years before he painted this wintry scene by the banks of the Aare River where it empties into Lake Brienz. In January 1877 Leslie Stephen and Loppé met in Bern for their first winter trip to the Bernese Oberland. They headed for the Lauterbrunnen Valley and afterwards to Meiringen where they visited the 'King of the mountain guides' Melchior Anderegg who was not only Leslie Stephen's favourite guide but also one of Loppé's preferred travelling companions too. For over two weeks, with Melchior Anderegg in tow for the harder passages, Loppé and Stephen roamed the secluded valleys, passes and glaciers of the Oberland, getting as far south as Grimsel. Loppé discovered the charms of Interlaken and Meiringen and re-acquainted himself with Grindelwald, a village which became a firm favourite like Zermatt and Chamonix for years to come.

The journey was deemed such a success that for the next twenty-five years, hardly a January or February passed, where Loppé did not revisit that part of the Bernese Oberland with his family and friends, often retracing those same itineraries from that initial voyage.

With great skill Loppé captures here the deep and set-in cold amidst the shrubbery and reedy shallows beside the river. Two boats can be made out far off in the middle of the Brienzensee.





**Carl Kessler (1876-1968)**

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

watercolour, 37 x 50 cm.

signed and inscribed on verso: *Klosters bei Winter*

Looking along the Klosters valley from near Monbiel, the Wisshorn and Canardhorn rear up in the background. There is a distinct feeling that spring is on its way beside the Landquart river. Kessler was a specialist watercolour painter 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.



**François Louis Fritz de Niederhäusern (1828-1888)**

*The Wetterhorn above Grindelwald looking from Kleine Scheidegg, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on paper laid on panel, 31.5 x 44.5 cm.  
dated 1852 and inscribed on verso: *Fritz de Niederhäusern, août 1852*

Niederhäusern was a Swiss pupil of Alexandre Calame. He came from Mulhouse originally and was possibly still in Calame's studio or taking part in his annual summer painting school in Meiringen when he made this oil study in August 1852. One of the first things one notices in this view looking towards the Wetterhorn and the Grosse Scheidegg pass, is the thick band of ice tumbling down towards Grindelwald off the west flank of the mountain. The Upper Grindelwald Glacier has now receded far back up the valley and in its wake, there is now a considerable chasm between the moraines. Notwithstanding the effects of a warming climate, this is still one of the finest views in the Alps, and largely unchanged since Niederhäusern's time.



**Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)**

*Mont Blanc as seen from the Lago Chécrouit, Val d'Aosta, Italy.*

oil on panel, 34 x 44cm.

signed, inscribed on verso: *Vento di Ovest sul Monte Bianco (Colle Chécrouit)*



The Chécrouit lake, in fact more of a large pond, is situated at over 2,000 metres near the Colle Chécrouit directly opposite the south face of Mont Blanc. Today, it is easily accessible by a telecabine lift from Courmayeur and its view to the north, across the wooded Val Veny is spectacular. Seen from this side Mont Blanc's Brouillard and Innominata glaciers and ridges give the enormous mountain a Himalayan character. In English, Abrate's inscription on the back of the panel reads as 'West wind on Mont Blanc' as shown by the clouds and plumes of snow spilling off the summit and its east ridge on an otherwise bright and clear day.





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

*The Eiger and Mönch in winter, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.

signed





**Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)**

*First snows, Les Houches, Savoie, France.*

oil on panel, 34 x 44 cm.

signed, inscribed on verso: *Première neige, Les Houches, 1936*

This is an unusual and charming picture by Abrate. It seems to have already snowed a good deal before this blizzard came on and a closer inspection of the painter's technique shows some rapid passages of painting and broad applications of paint on top of which, Abrate would have flecked all the tiny snowflakes tumbling from the sky. The flat light and deadened atmosphere give the picture a vaguely *art naïf* look as well as an unintended association with the early Flemish painters' attempts at snowy landscapes.



**Hans Maurus (1901-1942)**

*The Matterhorn seen from Riffelalp, Zermatt, Valais, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 60.5 x 80.5 cm.

signed




**Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)**

*The Lac de Goillet and the Matterhorn, Val d'Aosta, Italy.*

oil on panel, 34 x 44cm.  
signed

As with Abrate's Lago di Chécrouit picture, (see p. 24), he managed to expertly capture the sense of breeze and light falling in and out of shadow in this souvenir from the Lac de Goillet. In a masterful portrayal of a late spring day, the lake is smoothly rendered and the water seems relatively calm. However, the fluffy clouds and squiggly lines across the snout of the glacier, all suggest a rapidly executed painting. Whilst the foreground and smaller mountain beyond the lake are in shadow, the Matterhorn catches the midday sun which intensifies its majestic profile. Using the orange-coloured priming to its full effect, Abrate's high mountain sky also conveys a period of stable and high-pressure weather.



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

*The Wetterhorn in winter, Grindelwald, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.  
signed



Contencin's snowbound vision of the Wetterhorn is without doubt one of his most successful compositions. (see pp. 42) He chose his viewpoint from just below First, high up on the south side of the Grindelwald valley and, to its right, it still provides one of the great panoramas of the Alps, namely: the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau triumvirate.

Cut off from the valley by a heavy fog, the tiered and soaring Wetterhorn seems to be even more dominant. With a thorough understanding of his palette, in this instance, Contencin animated the fog with flashes of magenta and umber to prevent it becoming too leaden and his sky too boasts areas of yellow ochre and silver to offset the mass of snow and rock. Despite the cold atmosphere, such use of colour means that his paintings never become too hard nor unconvincing.





**Joseph Rummelspacher (1852-1921)**

*Looking north from the summit of the Ortler, South Tyrol, Austria.*

oil and tempera on card, 46 x 75 cm.  
signed and dated 1899



**Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)***The Matterhorn in the clouds, Val d'Aosta, Italy.*

oil on panel, 34 x 44 cm.

signed, inscribed on verso: *Il Colosso tra la nebbia (Cervino) Febbraio 1941*

This is a classic 'plein air' Abrate painting and could only come from the hand of a *peintre-alpiniste*. From up at approximately 2,500 metres, this is the south face of the Matterhorn in winter seen from between Valtournenche and Breuil. Abrate inscribed in Italian on its verso: '*Giant in the fog*' but the clouds and the fog seemed to have morphed into one as they swirl about the 4,478-metre pyramid of gneiss rock.

The snowfields and glaciers were depicted in a subtle array of purple, yellow ochre and umbers mixed with lead white. The panel was primed for painting on with a pink ground, as seen in the patches of fleeting blue in the sky. The difference in the tonal values between the rocks in the foreground and the flanks of the Matterhorn skilfully reflect the sense of void over the valley.







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

*The Chamonix Valley in summer seen from la Flégère, Savoie, France.*

oil on canvas, 37.5 x 55 cm.  
signed

Contencin painted this summery landscape from up at la Flégère on the south side of the Chamonix valley. Today this viewpoint is not far from the base of the Index chairlift. The sweep of the mule tracks going down past the hay loft draws the viewer's gaze into the composition. Throughout his mountainscapes, Contencin excelled at creating great depth and in this instance, high up over the valley, soar the tops of the Aiguille du Plan, the Aiguille du Midi and those of Mont Blanc several miles away.



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

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

oil on canvas, 46 x 65 cm.  
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 the valley and the town of Servoz far below.





**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 77 cm.  
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 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 Wetterhorn in winter, Grindelwald,  
Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 54.5 x 73 cm.  
signed





**Johann Gottfried Steffan (1815-1905)**

*The Handeck Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on paper on canvas, 25.5 x 45 cm.  
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.





**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*<sup>®</sup> 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.





**Jean-François Roffiaen (1820-1898)**

*The Meiringen Valley as seen from above the  
Brienersee, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on paper, 21.5 x 28 cm.  
signed lower left

In 1845 Roffiaen saw two paintings by Calame at the Salon de Bruxelles. He was so impressed by them that the young Belgian was awarded a place to train in his new mentor's Geneva studio for six months including studying in Calame's summer school in Meiringen. His style and subject matter remained close to Calame throughout his life and yet he seemed to specialize in painting Swiss lakes to a greater extent than many of his contemporaries. Roffiaen's work was admired and collected by the royal families of Europe.



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

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