

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Gabriel Loppé (1825 - 1913)

Sur le col du Géant – Soleil levant sur le Mont Blanc

oil on canvas, 20 x 14in (51 x 35.5cm) signed and dated 1890 inscribed on verso: Sur le col du Géant –
Soleil levant sur le Mont Blanc, Les nuages attirés par la chaleur montent du fond de la vallée de
Courmayeur sur les cimes – Italie. Peaks & Glaciers 2019, p. 30

In 1877 Loppé and his eldest daughter Aline had spent several consecutive days and nights staying up at the Col du Géant which straddles the frontier between France and Italy. Characteristically, Loppé had wanted to be amongst the first climbers to use the cabin that had just been built the year before by the Italian Alpine Club. Weather permitting, Loppé planned to paint as much as possible and take thermometer readings on a regular basis. Defying the isolation and some fierce storms that they encountered, it proved to be one of his most memorable painting trips. The account of their week-long stay was published in that year's *L'Annuaire du Club Alpin Français* (the French Alpine Club's Journal) entitled: *Une semaine au Col du Géant* in which he likened the lofty spot to being in a hot air balloon basket, especially when the clouds rolled in through the valleys. The seclusion and the remoteness was everything he had hoped for and it gave him the opportunity to feel as close as possible to his 'white and cosmic Alps.' Loppé painted in all conditions and when a hailstorm came through, he seized the moment: 'I liked painting these blowy moments, trying to capture the strange cloud formations dancing above us'. This was quintessential plein-air work and the painter spent days on end absorbed in his pictures. He would return to the Col du Géant quite regularly over the next two decades. Today, the popular and comfortable Refugio Torino hut which replaced that initial rudimentary shelter can be accessed via cable car from Courmayeur below. Nevertheless, the panorama remains as remarkable

as ever: the entire Aosta valley unfurls at one's feet with France to the right and Italy below and off to the east. Mont Blanc's south face with the jagged line of its Peuterey Ridge is a sight to behold and, all the more so, as day breaks.