

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Gustave Eugene Castan (1823 - 1892)

Climbers ascending Mont Blanc via the Grands Mulets Glacier, Chamonix, France.

oil on paper laid on canvas 15 x 22½in (38 x 57cm) signed, circa 1885 Peaks & Glaciers 2019, p. 6

Only a handful of glacier scenes exist by this classically trained Swiss painter, academician and printmaker. This fine study, made in oils on paper en plein air, is as fascinating as it is rare. Born in

Geneva, Castan was a direct contemporary of Gabriel Loppé when they were both students of Alexandre Calame between 1844 and 1846. After an apprenticeship with Rodolphe Töpffer in Geneva,

Castan travelled to Meiringen in the Bernese Oberland to study landscape with Calame. Castan's friendship with Loppé lasted beyond those two summers and, in all likelihood, it was Loppé who took him up to the Grands Mulets to paint this scene. Having established himself as a regular participant at the Paris Salon between 1855 and 1882 Castan became a successful landscape painter inspired by Corot and Daubigny and is better known today for his views of the Normandy coastline. Indeed, there are no Salon records of any similar high Alpine scenes by him and this painting was surely done as a record of his expedition to the flanks of Mont Blanc. The spidery figures were perhaps a later addition by the painter even if their scale is in proportion to their surrounding glaciers and crevasses.