

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898 - 1955)

Le refuge du Couvercle, Mont Blanc, France

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

signed

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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.