

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Gabriel Loppé (1825 - 1913)

A Forest scene near Bern, Switzerland

oil on card

60 x 45 cm.

signed and dated: 30.12.78

For Loppé and many of his contemporaries, Bern was the *rendez-vous* point, the gateway for trips into the Bernese Oberland both summer and winter. The painter's diaries record correspondence with both his friends and guides, especially Melchior Anderegg, arranging dates to meet in Bern often at the railway station. From his earliest days in the mountains and his friendship with Beresford Walker, the Liverpudlian who first introduced him to climbing, Loppé retained strong ties with a few families in Bern. He therefore knew both the city and its surroundings well and would spend up to a week at a time there either side of an excursion.

Loppé would have painted this sort of oil study, in this case a graceful memory of trees under the snow, purely for pleasure and he had the advantage of not having to rely on clear weather when inside a forest.

Exhibited in German as *Waldinneres* or *Intérieur de forêt* in French, pictures of forest interiors had become a sub-genre of landscape in their own right around the time Loppé took up painting. Painters

such as Loppé's teacher, Alexandre Calame and his contemporary, Johann Gottfried Steffan were fascinated by these scenes from a technical point of view, capturing the filtered light and dimly lit backgrounds but equally, as late Romantics, seeing them as repositories of folklore and mystery as well as shelter from the elements.