

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Gabriel Loppé (1825 - 1913)

The Quai du Mont Blanc in Geneva, Switzerland.

oil on paper laid on canvas

36.5 x 46 cm.

signed

Although this graceful view of the Geneva quayside is not dated, it is worth remembering that Loppé lived in the city, in fact in the *vieille ville* quartier near the cathedral, from 1862 until 1880. It was where he first exhibited his pictures and, more importantly, began to receive commissions. The timing of his move from Annecy coincided with him increasingly participating in exhibitions throughout Switzerland, France and even in England. This explains why he was often considered a Swiss painter as was the case in London's 1862 International Exhibition. Loppé's four mountain landscapes were duly displayed in the Swiss Pavilion. Regardless of its proximity to Chamonix and the ability to travel relatively easily by train from Geneva, especially to Paris, Loppé was very settled there. He remained a regular visitor to the city even after he had re-married and moved to Paris with the children in 1880.

Just as when Loppé lived in Annecy with its wellknown lake, the Lac Léman and its surrounding towns, meadows and mountains was an endless source of inspiration to the painter- and in all seasons.

The elegant barge shown at its mooring with its furled sails was in fact a commonplace sight all along Lake Geneva. They were mostly built further along the lake at St. Gingolph, where Loppé liked to paint in winter especially, and in spite of their streamlined aspect, they were mainly used for hauling stone or gravel from one end of the lake to the other. Moving off the barge there is a man pushing a wheelbarrow and behind him and beside the crane, one sees large blocks of stone already unloaded. The whole lake seems to shimmer in an autumnal or early spring haze. Much further off to the left in the distance is the distinctive tower of the St. Pierre cathedral up in the old town. Just like the great *vedute* painters of eighteenth-century Venice, Loppé, the lover of *la modernité* and just as at home painting in Europe's

big cities as in a remote mountain refuge, managed to capture a sense of activity and stateliness at the same time. Fortunately, the grand façades of the Beau Rivage hotel and the Ritz Carlton beyond it have changed little since Loppé painted this from the end of a jetty.