

# JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



**Otto von Kameke (1826 - 1899)**

**Climbers on the Rhône Glacier below the Furkapass, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland**

oil on canvas

69.4 x 138.7 cm.

signed

An infrequent contributor to our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibitions, von Kameke is nonetheless a German painter worthy of more attention. Born into Prussian nobility von Kameke followed his family into the army and only changed careers in his mid-forties when he enrolled into the newly founded Grand-Ducal Saxon Art School in Weimar. Like the French Barbizon painters, the emphasis was on *plein-air* painting and in the tradition established by the Dusseldorf Academy, students were sent to Rome to study landscape. One of von Kameke's first teachers was the now famous Symbolist painter from Basel, Arnold Böcklin, followed by a fellow Prussian count, Stanislaus von Kalckreuth who specialized in mountainscapes. Records don't show whether von Kameke climbed or not, but his Alpine scenes executed with a traditional palette inspired by Alexandre Calame are lively and sometimes coming just short of melodramatic.

This imposing glacier landscape is no exception complete with the figures clambering across the snout of the Rhôneégletscher as some enormous seracs teeter over them. Today, this end of the glacier has completely disappeared and looking from the nearby Belvedere Hotel the moraines flank a vast scoured-out bowl where the ice once flowed. The few buildings further down the valley are in the hamlet, Gletsch and the pyramid-shaped mountain in the furthest distance beyond it is the Weisshorn. High up to the right of the figures is the Vorder Gärstenhorn and then a few valleys away to the west, one can see those giants of the Aletsch Glacier, the Finsteraarhorn and the Aletschhorn.