

PEAKS AND GLACIERS 2012

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS

44 OLD BOND STREET, LONDON W1S 4GB

TEL: +44 (0)20 7493 7567 FAX: +44 (0)20 7493 5537

william@johnmitchell.net

www.johnmitchell.net

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LONDON

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On view 19th January to 2nd March 2012

All paintings and drawings are for sale unless otherwise stated.
Catalogue compiled by W.J.Mitchell



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EDOUARD MENTA (1858–1915)

Sailing barges on Lake Geneva near Bouveret

oil on canvas, 13 ¾ x 21 ¾ in. (35 x 55.5 cm.)

signed and dated 1882, with fine antique frame

Menta studied with Calame's principal successor in Geneva, Barthélemy Menn. Like Roffiaen, Chavannes, Boçion and Veillon, Menta painted many fine landscapes of Lake Geneva and its surroundings. Bouveret is close to the French border and still a ferry port today. The Dents du Midi at the far end of the lake can be seen in the background.



EDWARD THEODORE COMPTON (1849-1921)

Monte Rosa: the east face seen from the Cima di Jazzi above Macugnaga
watercolour, 12 ¼ x 18 ½ in. (31.3 x 46.7 cm.)
signed and dated 1907

E.T.Compton was a skilled alpinist who climbed more than three hundred peaks in his lifetime. Twenty-seven were first ascents. He lived most of his life in Bavaria near the Starnberger See. Today he is widely recognized as the leading painter of high altitude views in the Alps, in particular the Austrian Alps and the Dolomites. This highly proficient artist was equally good working in oils and watercolours, often producing large-format watercolours to be shown alongside his studio paintings. Monte Rosa's east face is the tallest wall in the Alps; its Himalayan proportions look all the more impressive seen from the Cima di Jazzi at 12,500 feet, bordering Piedmont and Switzerland.



ALEXANDRE CALAME (1810-1864)

Bernese Oberland: an approaching storm

oil on paper laid on panel, 11 ½ x 14 ¾ in. (29.3 x 37.8 cm.)

signed, with fine antique frame

A major figure of the Swiss school of landscape painting, Calame enjoyed international success during the nineteenth century. In 1835 he went on his first study trip to the Bernese Oberland, famous for its spectacular mountains and valleys and would spend nearly every summer in the Alps for the next twenty-five years. Although these oil studies were considered helpful working tools, necessary for the development of formal works of art, we now appreciate how much they reveal about the artist's working methods. Nothing was improvised, despite the bold compositions and dramatic lighting. The sheer walls of Mürren loom out of the cloud to the right of this composition.



CHARLES-HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)

The Aiguille Verte's east face seen from the Col du Chardonnet, Chamonix

oil on panel, 18 x 24 in. (46 x 61 cm.)

signed, with fine antique frame

Contencin grew up in the Savoie where he learnt to paint and climb. Chamonix, Zermatt and the Bernese Oberland were probably his favourite regions although he produced many alpine landscapes of the lesser-known Dauphiné. Towards the end of his life he was the President of the Paris based *Société des Peintres de Montagne* in Paris and his paintings were frequently displayed in regional and national exhibitions. Using a reddish priming colour, Contencin applied the paint in thick sections, often with a palette knife. The Col du Chardonnet lies at 11,500 feet between the Aiguille du Chardonnet and the Aiguille d'Argentière.



ALEXANDRE CALAME (1810-1864)

Mont Blanc Massif seen from Fayet

oil on paper laid on board, 11 ½ x 15 ¼ in. (29 x 39 cm.)

signed, with studio seal on verso and antique frame

Calame painted this bird's eye panorama of Mont Blanc from near Sallanches, between Geneva and Chamonix. The many summits which remain snow-capped throughout the year are beautifully drawn with vivid contrasts under a clear and even sky in direct contrast to the tonal and shadowy valleys in the foreground. Calame never wanted to sell his countless oil studies, which reveal the degree to which he strove for truth and exactitude at all times.



EDWARD THEODORE COMPTON (1849-1921)

The Weissmies seen from above the Lagginjoch, Saas-Fee

oil on canvas, 26 x 43 ½ in. (66 x 110.5 cm.)

signed and dated 1907

Since Compton had climbed all the notable peaks in the Valais the topographical accuracy in his work is nearly always faultless. This spectacular view of the Weissmies is painted looking south from the upper slopes of the Lagginhorn's east face. Over the summit ridge and to the right, lies the Saas-Fee valley. The Weissmiesgletscher lies in shadow to the left of the sunlit summit and meanders south into Italy.



ALEXANDRE CALAME (1810-1864)

After the storm: Grimsel Pass, Valais

oil on canvas, 13 x 16 in. (33 x 41 cm.)

signed, with antique frame

Literature: V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.345, no.136

The Grimsel pass links the cantons of Valais and Bern, where the Rhone river meets the Aare. Dateable to 1840, this beautiful early work is Calame at his best. Although the young artist would have seen quite a number of Dutch seventeenth century landscapes in Geneva, he went to Holland in 1838 to study Ruisdael and Hobbema's paintings. From earlier visits to the Louvre, Calame had made copies of Ruisdael's work and so it is more than a coincidence that he is referred to as the 'Jacob van Ruisdael of the mountains'. The poetic and romantic vision comes alive in this wilderness scene, overtaken by the forces of nature. The rain was skilfully rendered by scratching the palette knife through the wet glazes on the paint surface.



ALEXANDRE CALAME (1810-1864)

Fir trees above Handeck, Bernese Oberland

oil on paper laid on board, 12 x 15 ¼ in. (30.5 x 39 cm.)

with studio seal on verso and antique frame

Calame's landscapes could be interpreted as *mementi mori*. Painted as compositions of specific motifs : lakes, cliffs, glaciers, waterfalls, steep slopes, peaks, storms, beeches, tree-stumps and firs, they echo Calame's belief that his work was a homage to God. However conventional they may seem superficially, the landscapes he sought out, often dominated by fir trees, leave man as the passive spectator in contemplation of the Sublime.



CHARLES- HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)

Winter sunset: The Wetterhorn and Wellhorn seen from Rosenloui, Bernese Oberland

oil on canvas, 19 ¾ x 24 in. (50 x 61 cm.)

signed, with antique frame.

Few recognized artists who were lured to paint and draw in the Alps since the early 1800s failed to depict this famous view which is almost identical today. A paved road for bicycles now runs beside the Reichenbach river which flows down to the Schwarzwaldalp hamlet at the foot of the Wetterhorn. In Contencin's version the main peak of the Wetterhorn is shrouded in late afternoon cloud, emphasizing the mountain's sheer north face which plunges straight into Grindelwald. The Rosenloui glacier tumbles down from behind the Wellhorn to the left of the composition. *author's pick

ALEXANDRE CALAME (1810-1864)

The Weisse Lütschine near Stechelberg, Lauterbrunnen
oil on paper, 18 ¼ x 13 in. (47 x 33 cm.)

Literature: V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.337, no.89

There are three known versions of this oil study dating from the early 1840s and now identified as painted in the upper, or southern, end of the Lauterbrunnen valley. The Breithorn is hidden by clouds but the Tschingelhorn can be seen above the stands of fir trees on the right. Mist mingles in the tops of the trees in the upper left. Beyond the fallen tree trunk the river narrows and becomes a series of small cascades.





ALBERT LUGARDON (1827–1909)

The Eiger

oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 23 in. (69 x 59 cm.)
signed lower right, with fine antique
frame

Lugardon was one of Calame's many pupils in 1850. He travelled extensively within Switzerland undertaking painting trips every summer from 1865 onwards, yet most of his Salon exhibits and major compositions depict the Bernese Oberland. By the mid-1880s Lugardon began to experiment with photography in London and Geneva. This *Eiger* dates from the early 1850s and its later famous, even notorious, Nordwand seems quite benign in this scene. Neither the artist nor the grazing cattle above Kleine Scheidegg (!) could have guessed at the fame and mythology that would await the first climbers to attempt the face. Subsistence farmers had lived in these Bernese Oberland valleys for many centuries and it was precisely these locations that Lugardon and his contemporaries would seek out. Turning their backs on the lure of Europe and further afield, these landscape painters wanted to celebrate the beauty of their native land, keen to forge a national identity with their art in the wake of the collapsed Napoleonic Helvetic Republic.

TOUSSAINT-GABRIEL LOPPÉ (1825 -1913)

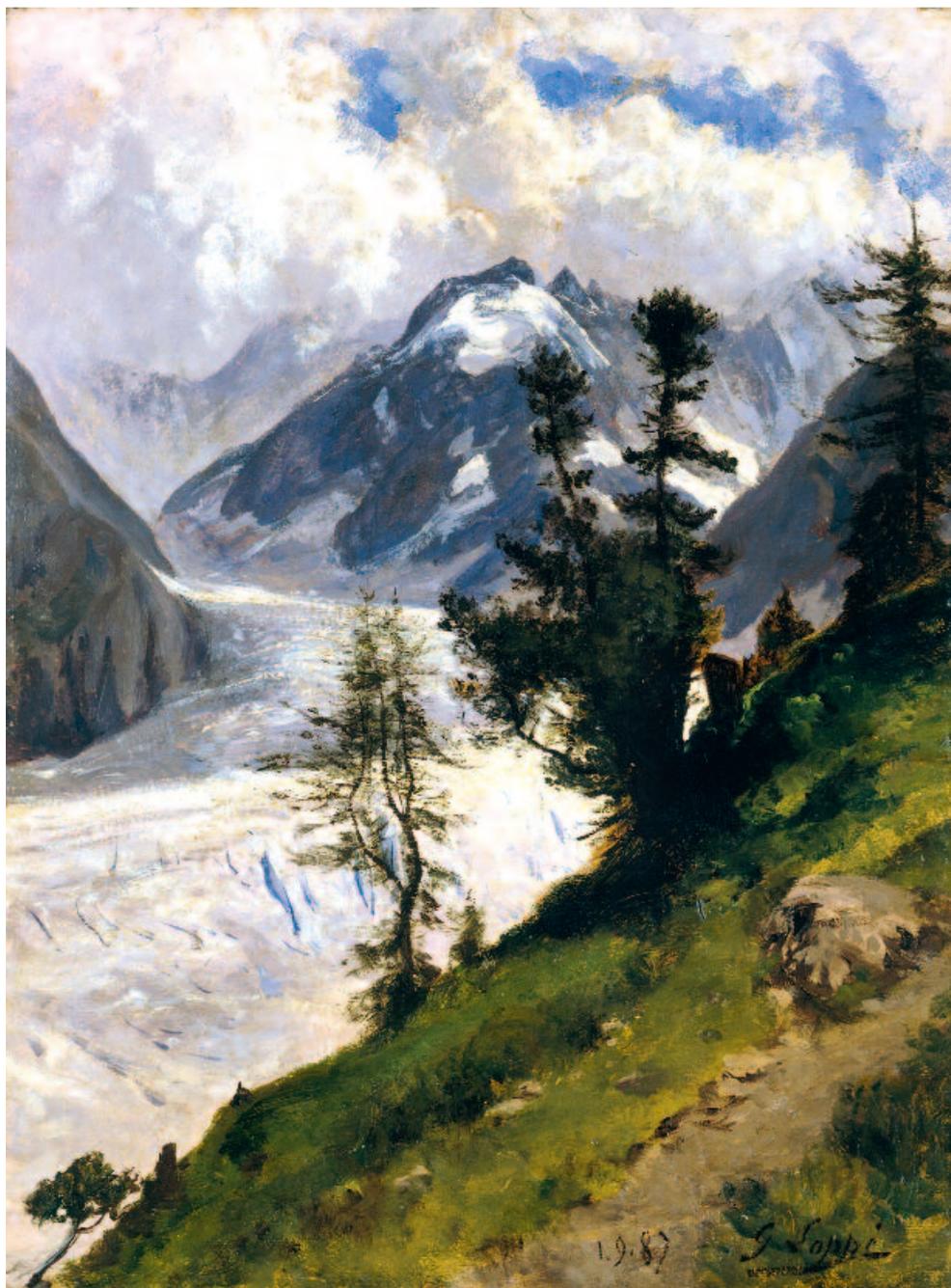
The Mer de Glace and the Aiguille du Tacul, Chamonix

oil on paper laid on canvas

15 ¾ x 11 ¾ in. (40 x 30 cm.)

signed and dated 1/9/87

Throughout the latter half of his life Gabriel Loppé spent most of the year in Chamonix. He built his home and his own studio near the railway station which he also used as a base for his many climbing expeditions. This oil study would have been painted in one sitting, perched above Montanvers. Loppé first set foot on the Mer de Glace in 1849 ; by the time he painted this landscape, few people alive knew its crevasses and surrounding peaks better; nor had anybody else sketched and painted in the area as much as he had done. In the distance, shrouded in clouds, are the Grandes Jorasses where Loppé made many ascents including a first ascent of Mont Mallet in 1871 with his closest friend, Leslie Stephen. In 1873, during another first ascent on the same mountain chain Loppé and Stephen discovered two dozen swallows scattered on the snow, recently expired in the thin air: the aptly named Col des Hirondelles is at 11,470 feet.





EDWARD HARRISON COMPTON (1881-1960)

The Grossglockner seen from the Kitzbühel Alps

watercolour, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (17 x 32 cm.)

signed



EDWARD HARRISON COMPTON (1881-1960)

Monte Rosa and Lyskamm seen from Gornergrat

oil on canvas, 34 ½ x 43 in. (88 x 110.5 cm.)

signed with original frame

Referred to as E.H. (Edward Harrison) to distinguish him from his father, Edward Theodore, this Compton was also a *peintre-alpiniste*. He was his father's only pupil and family diaries document an amazing number of climbing and sketching trips together. E.H. may have excelled at watercolours, a medium where he seems closest to his father's work, but his oil paintings, unsurprisingly, have a looser and more modern palette. The highest point in Switzerland and on Monte Rosa, Dufourspitze (15,200 ft), caps the sharp hogback ridge facing the east flank of the Lyskamm.



CHARLES- HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)
Zermatt in a winter dawn with the St. Mauritius Pfarrkirche
oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 22 in. (46 x 56 cm.)
signed, circa 1925

Views of Zermatt village, especially of its parish church, are comparatively rare, given the abundance of Matterhorn pictures from the last one hundred and fifty years. Many of the buildings depicted in this winter landscape are still standing. Indeed the church spire was only built in the early 1920s.



CHARLES- HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)

Winkelmatten Kapelle, Zermatt

oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 21 ¾ in. (46 x 55 cm.)

signed

Contencin seems to have favoured neither summer nor winter in his alpine landscapes; he was skilled in capturing both seasons. Apart from a discreet bus stop and a few trail markers little has changed to date in this Winkelmatten view. Dozens of small, devotional chapels remain in the Zermatt valleys at all altitudes.



THOMAS MILES RICHARDSON Jnr. (1813-1890)
The via Mala, Graubünden, Switzerland
watercolour on paper, 40 x 26 ½ in. (102 x 67.5cm.)
signed and dated 1878, with fine period frame
Exhibited: *Royal Jubilee Exhibition, Manchester, 1887.*

Richardson came from a family of painters in Newcastle and became, like his father and teacher, also Thomas Miles, a distinguished watercolourist. Although his Scottish and northern European scenes were widely appreciated, his Swiss and French Alps subjects are now more desirable to collectors. Indeed few better examples of Richardson's work than this *Via Mala*, have appeared on the art market in recent years. The *Via Mala* is a notorious gorge leading to the Splügen and San Bernardino Passes between Switzerland and Italy. Although tunnels have replaced many sections of the hazardous road, traces of the path and early bridges date back to the Romans. Built in 1738, the bridge crossing the chasm was known as the 'Southern bridge'. Its replacement is still used as a footbridge to access the right hand side of the valley. Richardson's dramatic image was possibly inspired by Turner's famous *Devil's Bridge in the St. Gothard Pass* (Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal) from 1804, one of his finest Alpine watercolours - if not his best.



THEODORE HOWARD SOMERVELL (1890-1975)

The Kangchenjunga Massif seen from Darjeeling

oil on board, 18 x 30 in. (45.7 x 76.2cm.)

signed with initials and dated THS 1943-71

Dr. T. Howard Somervell was a trained doctor, a scientist and a keen climber since his university days.

In his first Alpine season he climbed thirty major peaks in four different Alpine regions ! He served as a surgeon at the Somme in 1916 but his harrowing wartime experiences turned him into a pacifist who went to work for a missionary hospital in southern India. In 1922 Somervell was asked to take part in the Everest expedition becoming close friends with Mallory whilst there. He made the first summit attempt as far as 27,000 feet and returned in 1924 achieving a second near summit success with Edward Norton. His 1936 book, *After Everest: the experiences of a mountaineer and medical missionary* gives an insight into this remarkable all-rounder's career. The Alpine Club own some fine examples of his paintings and drawings from his expeditions.



TOUSSAINT-GABRIEL LOPPÉ (1825 -1913)
Crevasses on the Glacier du Géant, Chamonix
oil on canvas, 19 ½ x 14 ½ in. (49.5 x 37cm.)
signed and dated 1896
sold

The three minute figures on the right provide a sense of scale behind the vertiginous crevasse. The clouds swirling across the glacier give this powerful composition an atmosphere of altitude and thin air that only experienced *peintres-alpinistes*, like Loppé and E.T.Compton, could master.



CHARLES- HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)

The Lac d'Evettes, Vanoise, Savoie

oil on board, 13 x 16 in. (33x41cm.)

signed

Today the Glacier des Evettes is nearly a mile from this glacial lake. Contencin painted countless hamlets and villages in his native Savoie which have now become ski resorts as well as national nature reserves such as the Parc national de la Vanoise.



CHARLES- HENRI CONTENCIN (1898-1955)

The Jungfrau in winter

oil on board, 18 ¼ x 21 ¾ in. (46 x 55 cm.)

signed, with fine antique frame

The skier's trail flanked by chalets was a standard Contencin prop in his alpine scenery but, curiously, almost unique to his *œuvre* at the time. Using richly modelled impasto in the foreground, the artist succeeds in offsetting the gulf between the Wengernalp and the Jungfrau *massif*. Flashes of vermillion peeking through the composition betray his characteristic priming colour which moderated excessively cold blue and white in this excellent winter scene.



EDWARD HARRISON COMPTON (1881-1960)

The Jungfrau

watercolour, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 in. (30 x 38 cm.)

signed



HERMANN DISCHLER (1866 -1935)
Sunset at the Feldberger Hof, Breisgau
oil on canvas, 38 ¼ x 60 ¾ in. (97 x 154.5cm.)
signed and dated 1903
sold



GEORGES TAIRRAZ (*films*) (1900-1975)
The Drus, Chamonix
gelatin silver print, 12 x 9 ½ in. (30 x 24 cm.)
circa 1930



We at PT ski are passionate about mountains and all things Alpine. We loved last year's exhibition and found it truly inspirational. We wish John Mitchell Fine Paintings every success with their Peaks and Glaciers 2012 exhibition.

PT Ski specialises in holidays to Klosters. With its stunning scenery and classic Alpine charm there is nowhere better to enjoy the beauty of the mountains. We know exactly what makes a perfect skiing holiday and with our personal touch, local knowledge and attention to detail you can be assured of a truly wonderful time away. If you would like to know more about our service and the holidays we can arrange then please visit us at www.ptski.com, or call us on 02077365557.

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