

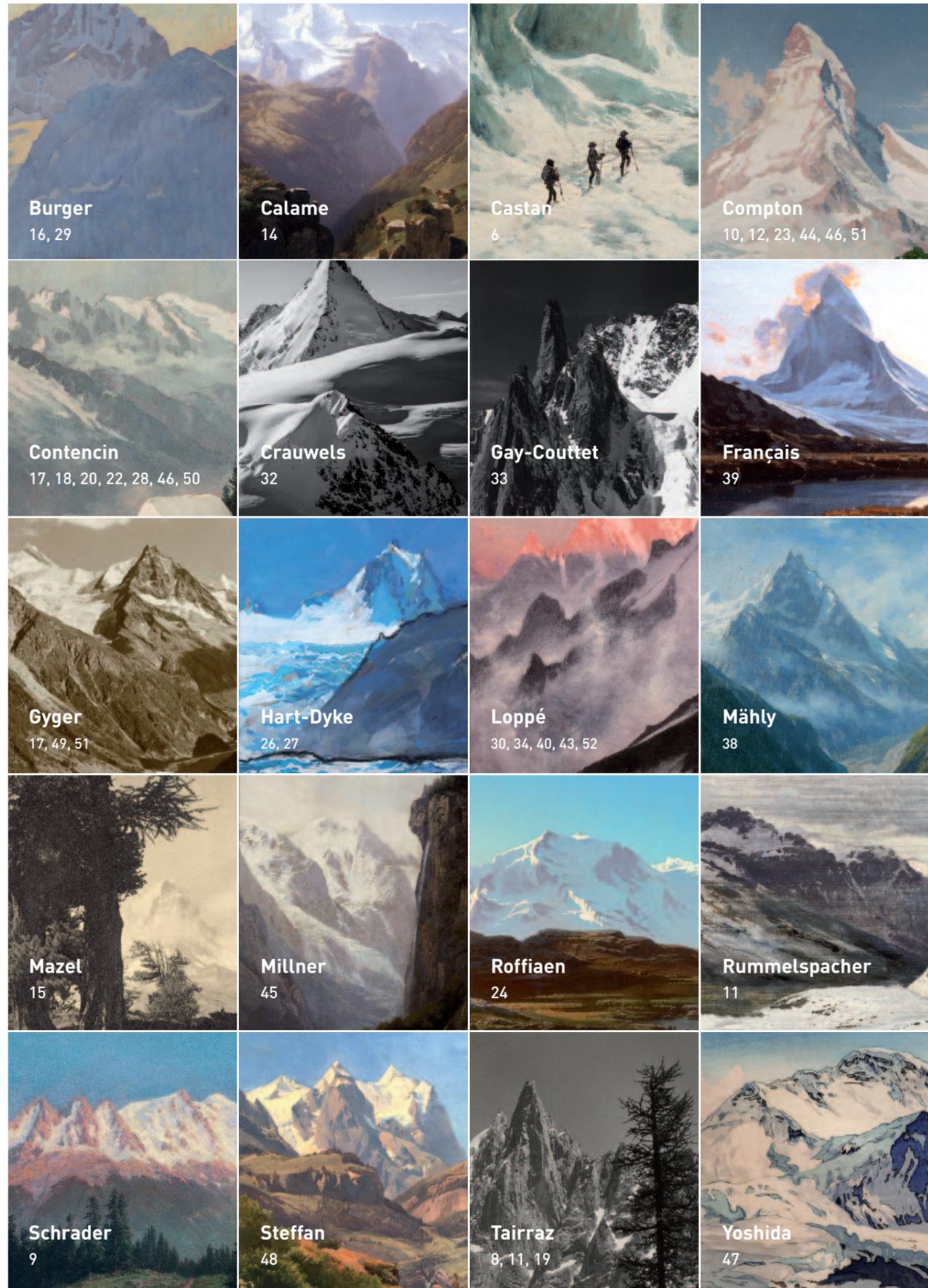
# Peaks & Glaciers

2019

JOHN MITCHELL  
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931





# Peaks & Glaciers 2019

All paintings, drawings and photographs are for sale unless otherwise stated and are available for viewing from Monday to Friday by prior appointment at:

John Mitchell Fine Paintings  
17 Avery Row  
Brook Street  
London W1K 4BF

Catalogue compiled by William Mitchell

Please contact William Mitchell on 020 7493 7567

[william@johnmitchell.net](mailto:william@johnmitchell.net)

[www.johnmitchell.net](http://www.johnmitchell.net)

This catalogue has been compiled to accompany our annual selling exhibition of paintings, drawings and vintage photographs of the Alps from the early 1840s to the present day. It is the firm's eighteenth winter of *Peaks & Glaciers*, and, as the leading specialist in Alpine pictures, I am proud to have handled some wonderful examples since our inaugural exhibition in 2001. In keeping with every exhibition, the quality, topographical accuracy and diversity of subject matter remain the overriding priorities even if the finest paintings in the genre are becoming harder to source. Where possible, I curate to the best of my ability the work of the aptly-named *peintres-alpinistes*. Although they were often accomplished climbers or had the soul and stamina of mountaineers, these were, first and foremost, professional painters. In their search for dramatic landscapes they were drawn ever higher up on to the glaciers and mountains. The true *peintres-alpinistes*, such as Gabriel Loppé, the Comptons, *père et fils*, and Contencin, to name but a few, embody the best of their school of painting. It is no surprise that, year in year out, their pictures are consistently the most sought after and it goes without saying how encouraged I am by the significant rise in auction prices for their finest paintings. Free from art market hype and investment speculation, these Alpine scenes offer a rewarding and, above all, highly enjoyable way to collect art.

In May 2018 we published the first extensive monograph in English on Gabriel Loppé, and further details of the book and how to order it have been inserted into this catalogue. The project was a long-held ambition of mine and one of the most rewarding aspects of writing the book was the opportunity it gave me to research in much further detail not only the 'golden age' of mountaineering in the middle of the nineteenth century but its development in the ensuing decades into the early 1900s. It reminded me of how the concept of the Alps as coined in Leslie Stephen's seminal book, *The Playground of Europe*, would have had a completely different legacy without the involvement of the Alpine Club, the oldest mountaineering association in the world. Indeed, our 2001 loan exhibition with highlights from the Club's picture collection contributed more than I could have hoped to this area of collecting. From its inception in 1857 the Club offered a gateway to 'organized' adventure and emancipation for the city-bound spirit. Through the Alpine



FIG 1 Climbers on the Schreckhorn at dawn with the Finsteraarhorn in the background. September 2018. Cataloguer's photograph.

Club's annual exhibitions from the late 1860s onwards, there was an active promotion and veneration of the Alps through all mediums of art, as artists tried to conjure up visions of snow and ice – in Loppé's words 'a reality that was more beautiful than in our wildest dreams.' With an increasingly interested audience, it is no surprise that by the end of the nineteenth century, the demand for Alpine imagery far outstripped the supply. This helps explain the baffling quantity of indifferent oil paintings of the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau and so forth still to be found today. In short, the story of the discovery and documenting of the Alps is still being written, and through pictures – both old and more recent – our knowledge continues to evolve and broaden.

In mid-September last year I climbed the Schreckhorn (4078m) in the Bernese Oberland together with three friends (FIG. 1) We set off from the hut soon after 2.30am. An hour later the still night air began roaring with the sound of a large avalanche across the valley and in the darkness all I could focus on was how long the rumbling lasted. Later on, as the sun came up, it was clear that an entire gallery of *seracs* had given way below the Fiescherhorn's lower slopes. The avalanche was indeed serious and one that will change the view onto the Ischmeer Glacier for many years to come. However, thinking back on it later that week, I was more concerned by the fact that when we stopped soon after the event to put on crampons I was only wearing a T-shirt, such was the warmth that night. Undeniably, the illustrations here offer irrevocable proof of retreating glaciers and the changing appearance of what were once tiny hamlets and empty valleys. I refer to this aspect in the brief picture captions since at the time when these wild landscapes began to fascinate outsiders, a period known as the 'Little Ice Age' was coming to an end. In the 1850s there was a sudden dramatic advance by the glaciers and nowadays the pictures in our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibitions offer a stark comparison. It is sobering to think how many mini ice ages there must have been over tens of millennia, how cyclical all these cooling and warming periods are. In the current melting phase Chamonix's once giant Mer de Glace glacier is losing an average of 35 metres per year and few people could reject which epoch we are now experiencing. The whole process may reverse, but not in our lifetimes.

Nonetheless, there appears to be no end of specialist property agencies advertising fashionable Alpine homes, and the Alps as both a summer and winter destination remain as appealing as they were in the mid-nineteenth century. Even for tourists with a limited understanding of the environmental impact caused by construction, deforestation and the costly infrastructure required for winter sports, the changes as mentioned above are hard to ignore. In many cases, they are man-made but our enthusiasm for these mountains and their valleys endures. Whichever memory or moment these pictures evoke for our clientèle; a view from a favourite mountain village; a particular scene remembered out walking, a day's climbing, skiing or ski-touring; it is their great variety in period, season and, above all, style that make for an enjoyable and interesting field of collecting and one that has not only grown in value but one that reaches an ever-wider audience of both active and aspiring collectors.

My greatest wish is that these paintings may bring readers the same pleasure that I derive from re-discovering and cataloguing them.

WJ Mitchell  
January 2019

Please note that there are more paintings, drawings and photographs for sale that are not included in this catalogue but can be accessed via our website under the section Alpine which is sub-divided into two sections: paintings and photographs.



**Gustave Eugène Castan (1823-1892)**

*Climbers ascending Mont Blanc via the Grands Mulets Glacier, Chamonix, France*

oil on paper laid on canvas

15 x 22½in (38 x 57cm)

signed, circa 1885

Only a handful of glacier scenes exist by this classically trained Swiss painter, academician and printmaker. This fine study, made in oils on paper *en plein air*, is as fascinating as it is rare. Born in Geneva, Castan was a direct contemporary of Gabriel Loppé when they were both students of Alexandre Calame between 1844 and 1846. After an apprenticeship with Rodolphe Töpffer in Geneva, Castan travelled to Meiringen in the Bernese Oberland to study landscape with Calame. Castan's friendship with Loppé lasted beyond those two summers and, in all likelihood, it was Loppé who took him up to the Grands Mulets to paint this scene. Having established himself as a regular participant at the Paris Salon between 1855 and 1882 Castan became a successful landscape painter inspired by Corot and Daubigny and is better known today for his views of the Normandy coastline. Indeed, there are no Salon records of any similar high Alpine scenes by him and this painting was surely done as a record of his expedition to the flanks of Mont Blanc. The spidery figures were perhaps a later addition by the painter even if their scale is in proportion to their surrounding glaciers and crevasses.



**Pierre Tairraz (1933-2000)**

*The Aiguille du Dru, Chamonix, France*

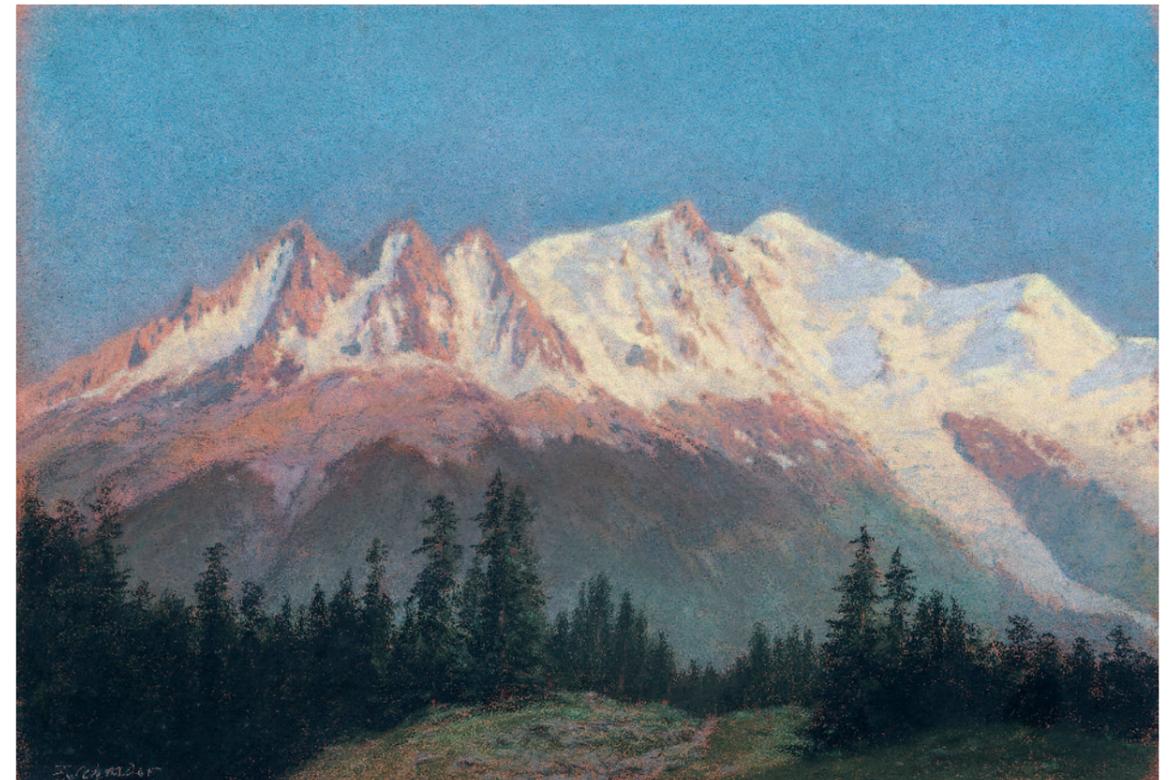
silver gelatin print  
15¼ x 12in (40 x 30cm)  
stamped on verso

**Franz Schrader (1844-1924)**

*The Aiguille du Midi and Mont Blanc seen from the north, France*

pastel  
13¾ x 19¾in (35 x 50cm)  
signed

Of Prussian origin, Schrader was a mountaineer, explorer, cartographer and gifted painter who made an important contribution to the mapping of the Pyrenees. As a true *peintre-alpiniste*, this delicate pastel of the Mont Blanc Massif marks his debut in our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibitions and Schrader's work is all the more relevant to this exhibition as he is acknowledged as founder of the *Société des peintres de montagne*. On November 25, 1897, as vice-president of the French Alpine Club, he held a conference at the club to establish an aesthetic credo of the mountain and announced the imminent formation of a French guild of mountain painters. The conference title was: *À quoi tient la beauté des montagnes* (What makes the mountains beautiful); the speech was considered the founding bulletin of the Société. In 1878 Schrader made the first known ascent of the central Pyrenean summit, the Grand Batchimale (3,176 m), which was consequently renamed Pic Schrader. When promoted in the 1890s to director of cartography for Hachette publishers, Schrader actively contributed to Hachette's Guides Joanne which became the famous *Guides bleues* in 1919.





**Edward Harrison Compton (1881-1960)**

*The Jungfrau Massif seen from below Männlichen, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland*

oil on canvas  
23½ x 31½in (60 x 80cm)  
signed

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. excelled at watercolours, a medium where he seems closest to his father's work, but his oil paintings were executed in a looser and more modern palette and come to life through a liberal but skilful use of impastoed paint. In composing this landscape of an Alpine summer's afternoon, Compton juxtaposed to great effect the greens of the stone pine trees and the meadows with grazing cattle against the sparkling snowfields and crevasses on the Jungfrau.

**Joseph Rummelspacher (1852-1921)**

*The Stelvio Pass, Bormio, Italy*

oil on canvas laid on board  
17¼ x 25.5in (44 x 64.5cm)  
signed and inscribed *Stilfser Joch*



At 2,727m the Stelvio Pass is the highest paved mountain col in the Alps. The original road was built from 1820-1825 by the Habsburg rulers to connect the then Austrian held province of Lombardy to the rest of Austria, with the road itself remaining much the same today. As a strategic border point between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy the pass saw fierce fighting during the First World War. The Stelvio pass is best known today for its popularity with motorists and cyclists and when open in the summer months, its seventy-five hairpin bends provide a gruelling stage for cyclists searching for the highest road in the Alps. A pupil of Theodore Hagen, Rummelspacher was born and trained in Berlin. Predominantly a painter of landscapes, his mountain views tend to focus on the Austrian Alps and Dolomites.

**Pierre Tairraz (1933-2000)**

*The Aiguilles de la République, Charmoz and Blaitière, Chamonix, France*

12 x 15¼in (40 x 30cm)  
stamped on verso





**Edward Harrison Compton (1881-1960)**

*The Matterhorn from Riffelberg, Zermatt, Switzerland*

oil on canvas  
 31½ x 39¼in (80 x 100cm)  
 signed and dated 1949

The walk or train ride from Zermatt to Riffelberg offers the finest and most iconic views of the Matterhorn's 'Hörnli' ridge. In the seventy years since Compton produced this summery 'portrait' of the Alps most famous emblem, the wide snow field straddling the base of the Matterhorn's south-east face has all but disappeared just as the glacier on the Zmutt Ridge to the north has shrunk considerably since the 1980s. Curiously, the peak's four sides face the four cardinal directions: north, east, south and west and it is undeniably a remarkable mountain, composed of gneiss rock. Geologically speaking it is classed as a 'cirque'. Despite Zermatt's relative remoteness, Whymper's conquest of the Matterhorn in 1865 became a *cause célèbre*. It abruptly concluded one era in mountain-climbing, making way for a more recreational approach rather than one of perpetual conquest. The accident didn't kill off climbing but the mountain's notoriety would turn Zermatt into another mecca for British tourists - as Mont Blanc had done for Chamonix; by 1880 the Matterhorn had been climbed 159 times: 132 ascents were made from the Swiss side and 27 from Italy. In 1960 the Matterhorn's silhouette, seen from this angle, was adopted by the Swiss chocolate maker, Toblerone.



Seen from high up above Zweilutschinen looking south, this is a striking view of the Jungfrau with the Monch to its right. It would be hard to find a more complicated composition in terms of picture planes and receding tones and colours. The canvas is a masterpiece in this aspect alone. The winding path to the right, with chalets either side, links the foreground with the middle of the landscape.

*The Jungfrau Massif* was chosen to be on the cover of the catalogue accompanying *Den Ville Natur Sveitsisk og Norsk Romantik* in Tromsø, Norway in 2007. This pioneering exhibition brought together works by Swiss and Norwegian Romantic painters in order to study their shared ideals and inspirations. Together with many other pictures by Calame this panoramic tour de force was also much admired in the exhibition entitled: *Forests, Rocks and Torrents* held at The National Gallery in London (2011). As the most important Swiss landscape painter of the early nineteenth century Calame enjoyed an international success with collectors and agents for his work as far afield as Russia. He was the first artist to dedicate himself

to depicting the Swiss Alps with topographical accuracy and from first-hand experience. 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, often journeying and working on his own. Ever aware of the transience and feeling of the moment, Calame's words from a letter to his wife offer a lasting interpretation of his landscapes: "Nothing elevates the soul as much as the contemplation of these snowy peaks...when, lost in their immense solitude, alone with God, one reflects on man's insignificance and folly."

The majority of his paintings and drawings were done before the 'Golden Age' of mountaineering which began in the mid-1850s. And yet it was only Calame's frail lungs that prevented him from working at a higher altitude; up beyond the ends of the glaciers and fulfilling his mission to become the first artist to faithfully sketch and paint from nature the high mountain passes, glaciers and summits. That accolade was to go to Gabriel Loppé, born fifteen years later than Calame.

**Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)**

*The Jungfrau Massif and Lauterbrunnen Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland*

oil on canvas  
19¾ x 24¼in (50 x 63cm)  
1854-1860

PROVENANCE

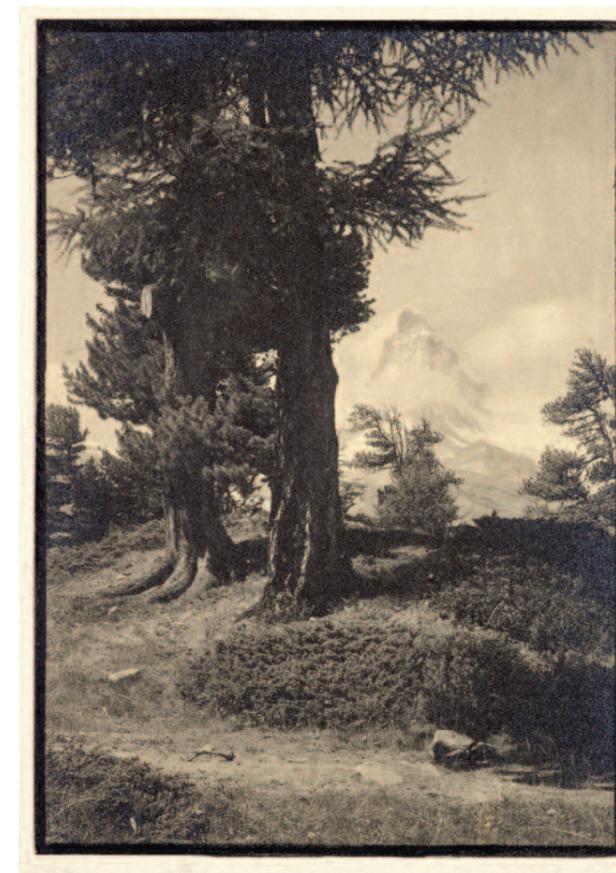
Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York.

EXHIBITED

*Den Ville Natur Sveitsisk og Norsk Romantik*, Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, Tromsø and Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen, Norway, September 29, 2007-August 31, 2008

*Forest, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscapes from the Lunde Collection*, The National Gallery, London, June 22-September 18, 2011 no.37

*The Rockies and the Alps: Bierstadt, Calame and the Romance of the Mountains*, Newark Museum, New Jersey, USA, March 24- August 19, 2018 no. 26



**Antoine Mazel (1864-1943)**

*The Matterhorn, Zermatt*

albumen print  
6½ x 4½in (16 x 11cm)



**Willy Burger (1882-1964)**

*The Dent Blanche as seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland*

oil on canvas  
23½ x 31½in (60 x 80cm)  
signed

The yellowing sky and lengthening shadows across the valley from the Riffelsee indicate a late afternoon above the Zermatt valley. The colours in this high summer oil painting belong to a dedicated Alpine painter and yet Wilhelm, or Willy, Burger is widely recognized today as one of the leading graphic artists of his time. He produced a prolific number of well-known lithograph posters, some of which sell for more than his oils and watercolours! However, he was first and foremost a painter by training. He apprenticed in Zurich before leaving for Philadelphia and New York in 1908. After working there for several years, he returned to Zurich from where he would travel throughout the Swiss Alps, the Mediterranean and even Egypt for his commissions. Although Burger cannot be categorized as a Symbolist in the strictest sense, his palette, his penchant for jagged outlines and ethereal skies owe much to Ferdinand Hodler, the leading Swiss painter of the late nineteenth century.

**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*Le Tour and the Aiguille d'Encrenaz in winter, Chamonix, France*

oil on canvas  
19¾ x 23½in (50 x 60cm)  
signed



Located between Argentière and Vallorcine, today Le Tour is still a relatively peaceful village in marked contrast to its neighbouring towns in the Chamonix Valley. Looking south to the Aiguille d'Encrenaz and the Aiguille de Mesure, Contencin made this painting after a heavy snowfall. In February 1999 nearly five metres of snow fell around Le Tour in the space of just two weeks resulting in a huge avalanche. It devastated many lives and blighted the aspect of the hamlet for evermore.

**Emanuel Gyger (1886-1951)**

*Alpe de Lirec, Monte Besso, Dent Blanche, Valais*

silver gelatin print,  
7½ x 11½in (18 x 28cm)  
circa 1930 inscribed with location





**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*The Breithorn and Lauterbrunnen Valley seen from above Wengen, Switzerland*

oil on panel  
12¾ x 17¾in (32.5 x 45.5cm)  
signed

The artist's inventive motif of ski or sledge tracks comes into its own in this beautiful scene painted above Wengen. With so much sunlight playing over the valley and the snowfields below the 'Lauterbrunnen' Breithorn, a thaw seems imminent. In a masterly manner, Contencin used his dark line of trees to cut the view in half pictorially; to conjure the sense of a vast void beyond before one's eye alights on the rocky wall across the valley. Despite its relatively small format, this painting is complex but highly successful and one where the painter has favoured using the wooden panel's 'ground' as a colour intermittently. However, as is often the case in Contencin's pictures, the confident handling of the old snow in the broad foreground is the key to both the composition's success and its visual appeal.



**Pierre Tairraz (1933-2000)**

*Winter in Le Pratz with the Aiguille de Dru, Chamonix, France*

silver gelatin print  
19 ¾ x 23¾in (50 x 60cm)  
stamped on verso

**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*The Wengernalp in winter looking towards the Jungfrau,  
Bernese Oberland, Switzerland*

oil on canvas  
23¾ x 28¾in (60 x 73cm)  
signed

This deep winter view of the Jungfrau is without doubt one of the finest Contencin paintings to have been offered in *Peaks & Glaciers* for over a decade. The combination of a snowed-in farmer's hut with sled tracks and a stand of pine trees puts the Jungfrau's giant north face into proportion. It also adds a sense of isolation up above the valley. A century later this dramatic view remains more or less the same and admirers of Contencin's work continue to appreciate his gentle but highly effective colour scheme. This original and self-taught painter often applied the paint in thick sections with a palette knife creating passages of impasto to suggest crevasses and folds in a snow field. In this instance, and as ever in his paintings, the technique proved highly effective.





**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*La vallée des Contamines en hiver,*  
Haute-Savoie, France

oil on canvas  
20 x 29in (51 x 74cm)  
signed

Les Contamines-Montjoie lies in a secluded valley between Megève and Chamonix. As well as a fine Savoyard church from the Baroque era, many of its original buildings still stand, especially its barns and haylofts, and a 15,000-acre nature reserve was set up in the 1970s to protect the area. In this late afternoon scene Contencin has conjured the essence of a winter coming to an end. The lingering snows on the farmhouses have begun to thaw and a stand of tawny coloured larches add warmth to the composition. A patch of mist is catching the dwindling sunlight further down the valley and subtly pushes the long chain of the Aravis mountains deep into the background.

**Edward T. Compton (1849 -1921)**

*Mt. Watzmann seen from the Hotel Post in Berchtesgaden, Bavaria*

watercolour and gouache on paper  
10¼ x 9¼in (26 x 23.5cm)  
signed



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 one of the leading painters 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.



**Jean-François Roffiaen (1820-1898)**

*Sunrise on Monte Rosa seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland*

oil on canvas

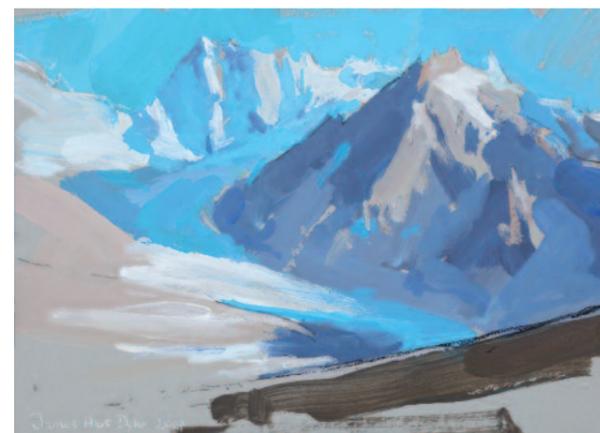
28½ x 46½in (72.5 x 118cm)

signed and dated 1871

In 1845 Roffiaen saw two paintings by Alexandre Calame at the Salon de Bruxelles. He was so impressed by them that the young Belgian was awarded a place to train in his new mentor's Geneva studio for six months. His style and subject matter remained close to Calame's throughout his life, but he travelled further afield to the Mediterranean. Roffiaen's work was admired and collected by the royal families of Europe and this magnificent dawn view of Monte Rosa is probably the prototype version for a large two-and-a-half metre canvas, dated 1875, now in the Brussels museum together with several other pictures by him.



**James Hart-Dyke (b.1965)**  
 Five (5) paintings on card – mixed media  
 each 8 x 11½in (20 x 29cm)  
 signed and dated: 2017



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

*The Grandes Jorasses seen from the Couvercle Hut, Chamonix*

*Mont Blanc seen from the Couvercle Hut, Chamonix*

*The Jungfrau, Bernese Oberland*

*Looking up the Glacier du Tacul to the Tour Ronde, Chamonix*

OPPOSITE

*The Breithorn, Lauterbrunnen Valley, Bernese Oberland*



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*Sunset at Wengernalp, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas

19¾ x 28¼in (50 x 72cm)

signed

Having survived the First World War when only 17 years old, Contencin trained as an architect and draughtsman and began to paint and climb in the Savoie and the Bernese Oberland. Initially he was employed by the French railways where he ended up commissioning works of art for their respective companies. Although he was technically an amateur painter, he was an active member of the Paris based *Société des Peintres de Montagne* and his paintings were frequently displayed in regional and national exhibitions. Towards the end of his life he was the President of the Société.



**Willy Burger (1882-1964)**

*The Jungfrau, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland*

oil on panel

19 x 27 ½in (48 x 70cm)

signed and inscribed on verso:

**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)***Sur le col du Géant – Soleil levant sur le Mont Blanc*

oil on canvas, 20 x 14in (51 x 35.5cm)

signed and dated 1890

inscribed on verso: *Sur le col du Géant – Soleil levant sur le Mont Blanc, Les nuages attirés par la chaleur montent du fond de la vallée de Courmayeur sur les cimes – Italie.*

In 1877 Loppé and his eldest daughter Aline had spent several consecutive days and nights staying up at the Col du Géant which straddles the frontier between France and Italy. Characteristically, Loppé had wanted to be amongst the first climbers to use the cabin that had just been built the year before by the Italian Alpine Club. Weather permitting, Loppé planned to paint as much as possible and take thermometer readings on a regular basis. Defying the isolation and some fierce storms that they encountered, it proved to be one of his most memorable painting trips. The account of their week-long stay was published in that year's *L'Annuaire du Club Alpin Français* (the French Alpine Club's Journal) entitled: *Une semaine au Col du Géant* in which he likened the lofty spot to being in a hot air balloon basket, especially when the clouds rolled in through the valleys. The seclusion and the remoteness was everything he had hoped for and it gave

him the opportunity to feel as close as possible to his 'white and cosmic Alps.' Loppé painted in all conditions and when a hailstorm came through, he seized the moment: 'I liked painting these blowy moments, trying to capture the strange cloud formations dancing above us'. This was quintessential *plein-air* work and the painter spent days on end absorbed in his pictures. He would return to the Col du Géant quite regularly over the next two decades. Today, the popular and comfortable Refugio Torino hut which replaced that initial rudimentary shelter can be accessed via cable car from Courmayeur below. Nevertheless, the panorama remains as remarkable as ever: the entire Aosta Valley unfurls at one's feet with France to the right and Italy below and off to the east. Mont Blanc's south face with the jagged line of its Peuterey Ridge is a sight to behold and, all the more so, as day breaks.



**Thomas Crauwels (b. 1983)**

Two (2) photographs, each printed on Fine Art cotton rag paper and bonded to an aluminium DIBOND® panel.

Either 60 x 90 / 70 x 105 / 80 x 120 / 100 x 150 or 120 x 180cm

Each photograph is limited to 5 signed editions only and sold with a certificate of authenticity on the verso.

TOP *The Grandes Jorasses shrouded in fog, Chamonix*

BOTTOM *A Valais panorama, Switzerland*

**Roland Gay-Couttet (1925-2002)**

*The Grand Capucin and Mont Blanc du Tacul, Chamonix, France*

silver gelatin print

12 x 15¼in (30 x 40cm)

stamped lower right





**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

*The Shadow of Mont Blanc at Sunset painted from the summit on 6th August 1873*

oil on card laid on board

11¾ x 15¾in (30 x 40cm)

signed and dated: 6 aout 1873

Gabriel Loppé was recorded to have sketched on the summit of Mont Blanc on at least eleven separate occasions but his 'sunset' ascent of 1873 ranks as one of his most intrepid painting expeditions. This hitherto unpublished oil study is the companion picture to his *Coucher de soleil au sommet du Mont Blanc* which belongs to the Amis du Vieux Chamonix (FIG 2). It depicts the sun setting beyond the Aiguille du Gouter. In 1894, in the introduction to one of the best known and loved books about the Alps, *The Playground of Europe*, Leslie Stephen wrote a dedication to Loppé:

My Dear Loppé,

Twenty-one years ago, we climbed Mont Blanc together to watch the sunset from its summit. Less than a year ago, we observed the same phenomenon from the foot of the mountain. The intervening years have probably made little difference in the sunset. If they have made some difference in our powers of reaching the best point of view, they have, I hope, diminished neither our admiration of such spectacles, nor our pleasure in each other's companionship. If, indeed, I have retained my love of the Alps, it has been in no small degree owing to you

Seen from their summits, almost all mountain shadows look triangular regardless of the peak's shape. This is caused by the perspective of looking along a long tunnel of shadowed air. The tunnel's cross section is the shape of the mountain but its end is so far away that it looks insignificant. The finite size of the sun causes the fully shaded parts of the shadow to converge and taper away, and in Mont Blanc's case, this is over a distance of two to three hundred miles. As Loppé painted this remarkable meteorological scene at 7.30 in the evening, from 4,810 metres up, the temperature would have begun to plummet to around -15 degrees Celsius. His climbing companions became concerned for their safety as recounted in *The Playground of Europe's* chapter XI entitled, *Sunset on Mont Blanc*:

I had frequently wondered how that glorious spectacle would look from the solitary top of the monarch himself. This summer I was fortunate enough, owing to the judicious arrangements of one of his most famous courtiers-my old friend and comrade M. Gabriel Loppé to be able to give an answer founded on personal experience. The result was to me so interesting that I shall venture- rash as the attempt may be- to give some account of a phenomenon of extraordinary beauty which has hitherto been witnessed by not more than some half -dozen human beings.

It was in the early morning of August 6, 1873 that I left Chamonix for the purpose.

Carefully calculating our time we advanced along the dromedary's hump and stepped upon the culminating ridge of the mountain about an hour before sunset. We had time to collect ourselves to awake our powers of observation and to prepare for the grand spectacle for which preparations were already being made. There had been rehearsals enough to secure a perfect performance. For millions of ages the lamps had been lighted and the transparencies had been shown with no human eye to observe or hand to applaud. Twice, I believe only twice, before, an audience had taken its place in this lofty gallery; but on at least one of those occasions the observers had been too unwell to do justice to the spectacle.

And now we waited eagerly for the performance to commence; the cold was sufficient to freeze the wine in our bottles, but in still air the cold is but little felt and by walking briskly up and down and adopting the gymnastic exercise in which the London cabman delights in cold weather, we were able to keep up a sufficient degree of circulation. I say 'we' but I am libelling the most enthusiastic member of the party. Loppé sat resolutely on the snow; superior as it appeared to all the frailties which beset the human frame suddenly plunged into a temperature I know not how many degrees below freezing-point He worked with ever increasing fury in a desperate attempt to fix upon canvas some of the magic beauties of the scene.

And suddenly began a more startling phenomenon. A vast cone, with its apex pointing away from us, seemed to be suddenly cut out from the world beneath; night was within its borders and the twilight still all round; the blue mists were quenched where it fell and for the instant we could scarcely tell what was the origin of this strange appearance. Some unexpected change seemed to have taken place in the programme; as though a great fold in the curtain had suddenly given way, and dropped in to part of the scenery. Of course a moment's reflection explained the meaning of this uncanny intruder; it was the giant shadow of Mont Blanc testifying to his supremacy over all meaner eminences. It is difficult to say how sharply marked was the outline and how startling was the contrast between this pyramid of darkness and the faintly-lighted spaces beyond its influence; a huge inky blot seemed to have suddenly fallen upon the landscape. As we gazed we could see it move. It swallowed up ridge by ridge and its sharp point crept steadily from one landmark to another down the broad Valley of Aosta. We were standing in fact on the point of the gnomon of a gigantic sundial the face of which was formed by thousands of square miles of mountain and valley.

The huge shadow looking ever more strange and magical struck the distant Becca di Nona and then climbed into the dark region where the broader shadow of the world was rising into the eastern sky. By some singular effect of perspective rays of darkness seemed to be converging from above our heads to a point immediately above the apex of the shadowy cone. For a time it seemed that there was a kind of anti-sun in the east pouring out not light but deep shadow as it rose. The apex soon reached the horizon and then to our surprise began climbing the distant sky. Would it never stop? For a minute or two I fancied in a bewildered way that this unearthly object would fairly rise from the ground and climb upwards to the zenith. But rapidly the lights went out upon the great army of mountains and almost at a blow the shadow of Mont Blanc was swallowed up in the general shade of night.

The display had ceased at its culminating point and we had no time to lose if we would get off the summit before the grip of the frost should harden the snows into an ice-crust and in a minute we were running and sliding downwards at our best pace towards the familiar Corridor. We were between the day and night. The western heavens were of the most brilliant blue with spaces of transparent green whilst a few scattered cloudlets glowed as if with internal fire. To the east the night rushed up furiously and it was difficult to imagine that the dark purple sky was really cloudless and not blackened by the rising of some portentous storm. That it was in fact cloudless appeared from the unbroken disc of the full moon which if I may venture to say so had a kind of silly expression as though it were a bad imitation of the sun totally unable to keep the darkness in order.



FIG. 2





**Otto Mähly (1869-1953)**

*Monte Besso seen from Sorebois, Val d'Anniviers, Switzerland*

oil on canvas

34½ x 28¼in (88.5 x 72cm)

signed

Monte Besso (3660m) rises in front of the Zinal Glacier at the southern end of the Val d'Anniviers. A Basel artist, Mähly painted this mountainscape from high up above Grimentz on the western side of the valley. The river Navissence below flows into the Rhône at Sierre and the Obergabelhorn above Zermatt is just visible over Monte Besso's right ridge. The patch of strong sunlight falling on the glacial moraine right in the heart of the painting's lay-out, divides the various greens in the foreground from the rocks and glaciers higher up and away down the valley.

**François-Louis Français (1863-1933)**

*Le Mont Cervin, soleil couchant – a study*

oil on canvas

24 x 60in (61 x 152.5cm)

signed lower right

Français's panorama was a preparatory oil sketch for his large *Le Mont Cervin, soleil couchant* which was bought by the French State at the 1878 Salon and now hangs in the Musée Calvet in Avignon. The picture divided opinion amongst the Salon's art critics; many argued that the mountains and glaciers could never lend themselves to the picturesque where others saw the rhetoric of the sublime –especially against the contemporary context of mountaineering. Irrespective of its impact, the subject matter was quite a departure for both François-Louis Français and from the prevalent history and impressionist subjects. In 1995 the Avignon painting was included in the pioneering exhibition *Landscapes of France – Impressionism and its rivals* shown at London's Hayward Gallery and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The 1878 Salon jurors were evidently a forward thinking committee: Français received a Medal of Honour for his *Mont Cervin*.



**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

Twelve (12) gelatin silver bromide prints,  
each: 7 x 4¾in (17.5 x 12cm)  
circa 1881-1882  
with studio stamp



In 1861, Loppé was asked by Napoleon III's official photographers from Paris, the *Bisson Frères* to accompany them on the first ever photographic survey and expedition up Mont Blanc. It was the first of nearly forty ascents of Mont Blanc which Loppé would make in his lifetime. He assimilated the fundamentals of photography largely by himself and by the time he encountered an early camera in 1855, there were already twenty-seven variant processes to choose from. In the search for standardization there were many techniques and complicated chemical combinations all appealing to individual needs. And new methods were often the by-products of blunders and tinkering around in darkrooms. In Loppé's case, as with his painting, curiosity was the wellspring of his creativity. Its novelty readily appealed to the extrovert who, nonetheless, characteristically underplayed his approach to the art form; "I started to take a few photographs, most of all to have some memories of my grandchildren."

By the time Loppé began using a camera regularly in the late 1880s he had little more to prove as a painter; his success was undeniable. When assessing what Loppé himself thought of his photographs, the argument that he was too modest to recognize his talent is unconvincing. For such a *homme de son temps*, such a disciple of *la modernité*, it was inevitable that photography would

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

*The riverbed in winter, Zermatt;*  
*Repos aux Bossons, Mont Blanc,*  
*Chamonix*

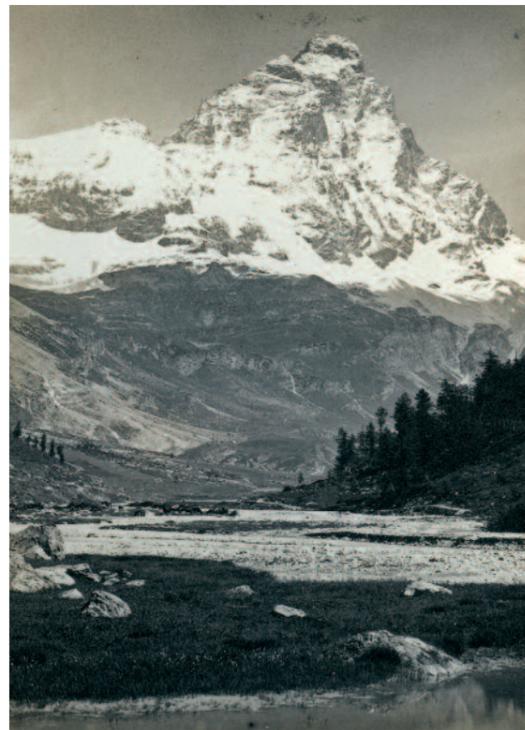
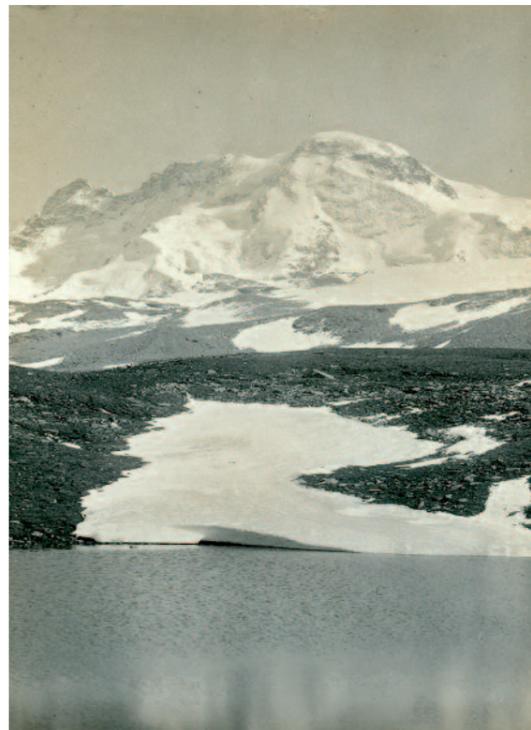
OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM

*The Riffelhaus above Zermatt;*  
*The Dent Blanche, Valais*



fascinate him and at one stage he owned over five hundred photographs taken by his contemporaries. From 1893 onwards, he was a member of the prestigious Camera Club in London that had been founded in 1885 and in anticipation of Paris's *Exposition Unviuerselle* he had applied for a special permit that allowed him to take photographs- 49 in all- of the pavillons and the Tour Eiffel under construction. After the Alpine Club began to include photography in its *Winter Exhibitions*, Loppé submitted some of his own silver gelatin bromide prints in 1889 and 1891 and the exhibition reviewer for *The Alpine Journal* was impressed: 'Amongst the photographs, the marvellous series of cloud studies by Gabriel Loppé reveal a rare and artistic flair in this medium.'

Loppé was one of the first ever photographers to capture the effects of fog, moonlight and, subsequently, artificial lighting in cities. In his search for the uncommon, the *cosmique*, nothing epitomizes Loppé's later photography better than his beautiful *nocturnes* and, above all, his famous photograph of the Eiffel Tower struck by lightning in 1902. And yet, inexplicably, Loppé never sold a single photograph that he had taken, preferring to give them to his friends and family. In his heart and soul he remained an *artiste-peintre* who never considered his photography anything more than an obsessive hobby he had come to later in his life.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

*Donkeys and grandchildren ascending the Brevent, Chamonix; Seracs at Schwarzthor near Zermatt;*  
*The Matter River in winter, Zermatt; The Breithorn, Zermatt*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

*At the foot of Monte Rosa, Zermatt; Glacial lake below Monte Rosa, Zermatt; Michel Croz's tomb,*  
*Zermatt; Matterhorn seen from Breuil*



**Edward T. Compton (1849 -1921)**

*The Hoher Dachstein and the Vorderer Gosausee,  
Salzkammergut, Austria*

watercolour on paper, 10 x 17¼in (25.5 x 44cm)  
signed and dated 25.7.75

**Karl Millner (1825-1895)**

*The Staubbach Falls, Lauterbrunnen Valley, Switzerland*

oil on canvas, 15 x 19¼in (38 x 50cm)  
with studio seal on verso 'K. Millner Nachlass'





**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**

*The Barre des Ecrins seen from above the Glacier Blanc, Massif des Ecrins, France*

oil on canvas  
18 x 22in (46 x 56cm)  
signed

The mountains that form the Massif des Ecrins rear up in the western French Alps, in a region known as the Dauphiné. Contencin returned to the area many times during his painting and climbing career and the Ecrins's peaks still offer some spectacular climbing with a lighter footfall of visitors in the late summer season. The Glacier Blanc tumbles off the north-east face of the highest mountain in the Dauphiné, the Barre des Ecrins (4102m), and extends for over three miles down into the Pelvoux Valley.



**Hiroshi Yoshida (1876-1950)**

*Jungfrau*

colour woodblock print,  
9¾ x 14½in (25 x 37cm)  
stamped with jizuri seal (self-printed) in the upper left margin  
signed and inscribed in pencil 1925

Hiroshi Yoshida's much-admired prints of European and American landscapes maintain an allegiance to traditional Japanese woodblock techniques and traditions. Born in 1876, he trained in Kyoto and Tokyo as a painter with an extensive knowledge of Western-style painting. Following the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, Yoshida embarked on a tour of the United States and Europe, painting and selling his work. Despite considerable success as an oil painter and watercolorist, Yoshida turned to woodblock printmaking upon learning of the Western world's infatuation with *ukiyo-e* prints. Returning to Japan in 1925, he started his own workshop, specializing in landscapes inspired both by his native country and his travels abroad which included this print of the Jungfrau. Yoshida often worked through the entire process himself: designing the print, carving his own blocks, and printing his work; processes that had traditionally been divided into separate disciplines. All of the prints produced in his lifetime are signed "Hiroshi Yoshida" in pencil and marked with a *jizuri* (self-printed) seal outside of the margin. Within the image, the print is also signed "Yoshida" with brush and ink beside a red *Hiroshi* seal. Yoshida was an avid alpinist, with mountains and water figuring prominently in his works. He later established the Japan Alpine Artist Association.



Having moved to Munich in his youth Steffan became known as the 'German Calame' although he was born in Zürich. He undertook many painting trips in the eastern part of Switzerland, in particular in Graubünden. This small canvas is a complex composition looking east towards the Wellhorn and Wetterhorn from the Hasliberg. It is one of the most

classic and oft painted panoramas by Swiss and German nineteenth century painters – and has changed little since in the last 150 years. Together with other pictures by Steffan this Wetterhorn view was much admired in the exhibition entitled: *Forests, Rocks and Torrents* held at The National Gallery in London (2011).

**Johann Gottfried Steffan (1815-1905)**

*Near Meiringen (The Wetterhorn)*

oil on canvas  
13¼ x 14in (34 x 35.9cm)  
1846

PROVENANCE

Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York

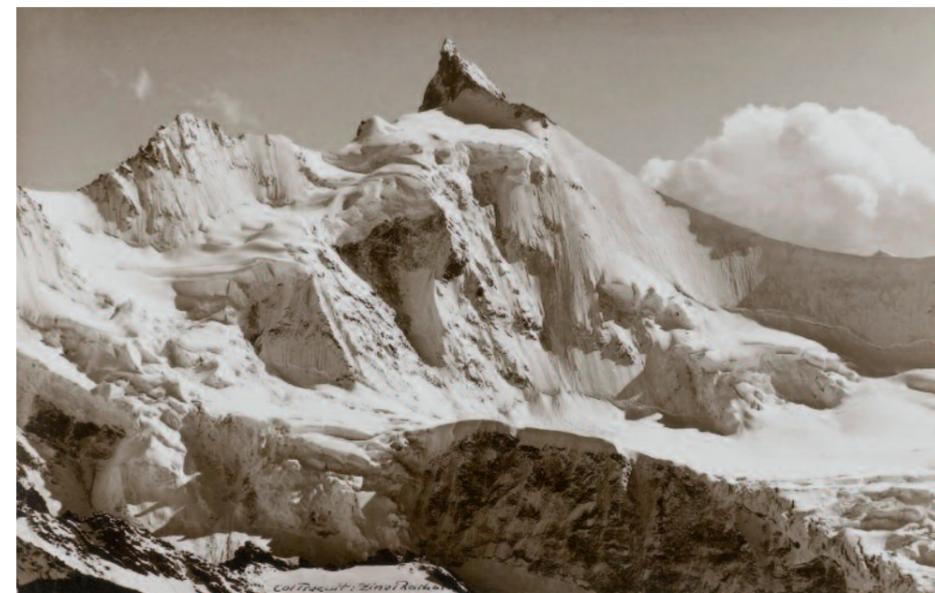
EXHIBITED

*Alpine Views: Alexandre Calame and the Swiss Landscape*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, U.S.A. October 8-December 31, 2006. pl. 29

*Den Ville Natur Sveitsisk og Norsk Romantikk*, Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, Tromsø and Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen, Norway, September 29, 2007-August 31, 2008, no. 23

*Forest, Rocks, Torrents: Norwegian and Swiss Landscapes from the Lunde Collection*, The National Gallery, London. June 22-September 18, 2011, no. X7089

*The Rockies and the Alps: Bierstadt, Calame and the Romance of the Mountains*, Newark Museum, New Jersey, USA. March 24- August 19, 2018, no. catalogue 13



**Emanuel Gyger (1886-1951)**

*Col Tracuit: Zinal Rothorn, Valais*

silver gelatin print,  
7½ x 11½in (18 x 28cm)  
1939 inscribed with location



**Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)**  
*Le Col des Montets en hiver, Chamonix, France*  
 oil on panel  
 19¾ x 28¾in (50 x 73cm)  
 signed

Contencin painted this view of Mont Blanc from between Le Col des Montets and La Flégère on the south side of the Chamonix valley. The sweep of cart tracks going down past the snowbound hay lofts draws the viewer's gaze into the composition. Equally, the hazy sky above the peaks softens the atmosphere to enhance the sense of distance beyond the stands of fir trees. Throughout his mountainscapes, the painter excelled at creating great depth and in this instance, high up over the cloudy valley, soar the tops of the Aiguille du Plan, the Aiguille du Midi and those of Mont Blanc several miles away.



**Edward T. Compton (1849-1921)**  
*Crevasses on the Gorner Glacier, Zermatt, Switzerland*  
 watercolour on paper  
 6¾ x 10in (17 x 25.5cm)  
 signed with monogram lower left and inscribed: *Gorner Eisfall*



**Emanuel Gyger (1886-1951)**  
*Zinal Rothorn, Monte Besso, Obergabelhorn, Valais*  
 silver gelatin print  
 7 ½ x 11½in (18 x 28cm)  
 circa 1930 inscribed with location



**Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)**

*Mont Blanc and the Chamonix Valley in summer*

oil on card

6 x 9½in (15 x 24 cm)

signed and dated: 24.7.1877

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William Mitchell [william@johnmitchell.net](mailto:william@johnmitchell.net)

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JOHN MITCHELL  
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17 Avery Row, Brook Street  
London W1K 4BF  
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7493 7567  
[www.johnmitchell.net](http://www.johnmitchell.net)