



Peaks & Glaciers®

2025

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

Peaks & Glaciers® 2025

Exhibition Catalogue

All paintings and drawings are for sale and are available for viewing from Monday to Friday by prior appointment at:

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Fieldwork on La Meije, Hautes-Alpes, France in September, 2024.

In order to celebrate the beauty and diversity of the Alps through art, year on year, I cast the net to source the best paintings and drawings for our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibition. Like early season snowfall, the catch remains unpredictable, but the search goes far and wide to ensure that the highest standards of quality and topographical precision are respected.

Every effort is made to combine the traditional strong suit, paintings by the earlier *peintres-alpinistes*, namely Calame, Loppé, Contencin and Abrate, with a more modern bearing, and *Peaks & Glaciers 2025* is no exception.

With their bold colouring and symmetry, the pictures by the Zürich-based lithographers such as Willy Burger and Plinio Colombi as well as the specialist German watercolourist, Carl Kessler, have a distinct visual impact. Nonetheless, they seem to complement the earlier works with their charm and relevance.

When revising and proof-reading the captions accompanying each picture, it has made me realize how many alpine paintings we have handled over the last two decades -and more, in fact; next year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary since these annual winter exhibitions started.

The predominant theme this year is not just the number of Swiss scenes, especially in and around the Lauterbrunnen Valley, but the number of pictures featuring lakes. There are no fewer than eleven landscapes featuring bodies of water, from small glacial pools to those inland seas around Geneva, Zürich and the cradle of the Helvetic Republic and its attendant legends, Luzern.

As rewarding as it is to research the locations and viewpoints, specifically the names of the peaks, both large and small, it involves a fair amount of rummaging through maps and images online. Thanks largely to photos posted from mobile phones in recent years, the task is sometimes a lot easier. However, given that those same photos are constantly being refreshed on the various search portals, so the evidence emerges of just how severely the glaciers and snow caps have shrunk since most of these painters were in their heyday. It bears repeating that as such, each year these paintings, especially the high-altitude scenes, become unwittingly ever more historic documents.

Indeed, like a biographer or a researcher, an art dealer's *métier* is not to judge but to make known, and for the reasons given above, it can be argued that all the pictures connect with each other and are worthy of inclusion.

The overriding ambition or mission statement is to remind us how much the Alps can engage our thoughts - in all seasons- whether as climber, skier, walker or *rêveur*. Painted in a largely pre-photographic age, these pictures would have rewarded their owners with the best possible memories of days spent in or above the Alpine valleys.

In passing them on to new generations, it may well be that many of the selected 'recollections' presented here can have the same effect on us.

W.J. Mitchell

January 2025



Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882-1964)

Lake Zug with Pilatus and Rigi, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 48 x 64 cm.

signed

Although Burger cannot be categorized as a Symbolist in the strictest sense, his palette, his penchant for jagged outlines and his ethereal skies owe much to his brief apprenticeship with Ferdinand Hodler, the leading Swiss painter of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, this atmospheric Zugersee canvas with the mountains Pilatus on the left and Rigi in the far distance, is very close to Hodler in style and spirit.

Wilhelm, or Willy, Burger is nowadays better known as a graphic artist and his lithograph posters such as Jungfraubahn. Station *Jungfrau: Joch 3457 m. Aletschgletscher*, 1914 and *St. Moritz*, 1912. However, he was first and foremost a painter by training who apprenticed in Zurich before leaving for Philadelphia and New York in 1908. He returned to Switzerland in 1913 and set up a studio in Rüschlikon on the west shore of Lake Zürich from where he would travel throughout the Alps, the Mediterranean and as far afield as Egypt for his commissions.



Plinio Colombi (1873-1951)

The Silvretta Glacier seen from Selfranga, Klosters, Graubunden, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 76 x 100 cm.
signed and dated 1918

Colombi came from a Swiss Italian family in Bellinzona and having studied architecture in Winterthur, decorative art in Paris and Bern, he had become an independent painter by 1900. Thanks to his apprenticeship as a designer and poster artist Colombi could turn his hand to engraving, lithography and woodcuts as well as oils and watercolours with equal aplomb. He began painting snow scenes in these early years when living near Lake Thun in the Bernese Oberland from where he made frequent forays into Graubunden and the Engadine.

Colombi was not a *peintre-alpiniste* but was particularly adept at painting wintry forests, wide snowbound meadows and usually worked with a bright palette. His work in oils veered more towards a lithographic look than his watercolours, which were more subtle.

Looking at the dates of many of his Klosters pictures, it is most likely that he lived there in the second decade of the 20th century.

Among the many accolades Klosters receives, it is often stated how unspoilt or relatively unchanged the surrounding villages are. Indeed, the two farmer's sheds seen in this panoramic composition are still there today and, in fact, come the summer, the eighth hole of Selfranga's golf course runs right beside the cabin in the immediate foreground.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)
The Grandes Jorasses and the Dent du Géant, Mont Blanc, France.
oil on canvas, 34 x 44 cm.
signed, inscribed and dated on verso: *Le Jorasses e il Dente del Gigante dalla base dell'Aiguille du Midi (1944)*

In 1942 the C.A.I. ('Centro Alpinistico Italiano' or the Italian Alpine Club) held a winter exhibition of Abrate's pictures. Reviews of the exhibition portrayed him as always having 'one hand on his ice-axe' and extolled his unusual ability to paint above 3,000 metres. Born in Turin, Abrate was, in fact, an acknowledged and accomplished climber by the time of the C.A.I.'s exhibition. He had joined the club in 1923 as well as the *Club Alpin Français* few years later making his mark in several notable climbs in the Mont Blanc region. He is best known for his first ascent in July 1923 of the south-west ridge of the Aiguille de Leschaux (3370m) made with two fellow Piedmontese alpinists.

The first exhibitions of his pictures were held in Turin in the mid- 1920s and were successful enough to encourage Abrate to show his work in Paris several years later in 1936 and 1937. Reviews of his Paris exhibitions focussed on his aptitude for painting snow in sub-zero conditions.

In the same manner as Gabriel Loppé a generation before, Abrate would force his climbing companions to loiter around whilst taking advantage of what he deemed the ideal conditions to paint in, regardless of the altitude and temperature. Abrate kept his painting kit to the minimum by using a specially constructed aluminium paint box strapped to his thigh. Putting his feet inside his rucksack and propping the open box on his knees, he could make rapid sketches using a palette knife to block in colours. In 1954 the art critic Joseph Budin wrote in *Le Patriote* about Abrate capturing the essence of high-altitude scenes, in particular his treatment of glaciers and crevasses: 'He sees the mountain as a climber would before looking at it from a painter's perspective and transmits his vision onto canvas with a masterly touch and finesse. In his studies, one feels the breeze and poetry from the summits, the purity of the air and the limpid light. His canvases diffuse a solemn silence.'

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Abrate moved to Sallanches below Chamonix and built a studio from where he made countless painting trips into the Mont Blanc massif. He continued to climb, paint and exhibit his pictures throughout the war, with this *Grandes Jorasses* view being no exception. At some stage Abrate became a French citizen and subsequently divided his time between the Chamonix valleys and the Val d'Aosta where his pictures were much sought after, especially in Courmayeur. He painted almost continuously until the late 1970s and exhibited his pictures in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Turin, Milan, Bologna, Aosta and Zermatt.

In 1975, Turin's Galleria Fogliato put on a retrospective exhibition of more than one hundred of his paintings entitled: *Cinquant'anni di pittura di Angelo Abrate* ('Fifty years of Angelo Abrate's paintings'). Apart from consolidating his reputation as one of the leading mountain painters of his generation, the opportunity to see such a body of work all together also proved to what extent Abrate was a mountaineer's painter through and through.

In the eighty-odd years since Abrate made this high-altitude view of the Grandes Jorasses emerging from the cloud across the Glacier du Géant, the seracs and crevasses directly to the right in the foreground have now completely disappeared. The location is at the foot of the path up to the Cosmiques Hut facing due south and again, the volume of the surrounding glaciers across to the Italian border by the Rifugio Torino has reduced enormously in the interim.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Fletschhorn and Lagginhorn above Saas-Fee, Valais, Switzerland.

oil on panel, 38 x 55 cm.
signed

The exact location of this lofty farmstead, almost hewn into the side of the valley, has not yet been determined. However, given the height of the Fletschhorn and the Lagginhorn seen far across the Saas-Fee valley, both hovering around the 4,000-metre mark, it must have been a remote setting for Contencin to have painted in. Aside from the striking composition, this picture offers a snapshot of Alpine life one hundred years ago. Stacked up on a rock platform and with stone 'feet' at each corner to prevent rats and mice from accessing it, hay stores such as this one on the right were prevalent in the Valais region and many of them are still in use today. Looking closely at the chalet to its left, with its green shutters, one can see a window box with flowers.

The viewpoint looks northeast and away from the Mischabel peaks which were behind where the painter sat. Looking from the left, the Jegihorn, Fletschhorn and Lagginhorn run into the chain of mountains dominated by the Weissmies to the right and not seen. The depiction of such a dramatic setting combined with the feeling of life carrying on around makes for an outstanding picture.



Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882-1964)

Lake Zurich seen from the Alpenquai, Zurich, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 35.5 x 60 cm.
signed

Painted just outside the city centre on the western side of Lake Zurich, Burger was looking from where the Rietberg Mansion and gardens are now laid out. The large sloping mountain in the far distance is Glärnisch which is only visible on clear days. Burger's home was further along the lake to the south at Rüschlikon but he sketched and painted the city in all seasons and nearly always looking east and south over the lake.



*Tödi with the Biferten Glacier,
Glarus Alps, Switzerland.*

oil on canvas, 60 x 81 cm.
signed and dated on verso: 1946

At over 3,600 metres the Tödi Massif dwarfs its surrounding peaks. As the tallest summit in the Glarus Alps, it is also the most visible of all the mountains when seen from the city of Zurich, dominating the skyline at the southern end of the lake. These steep and relatively remote valleys around Tödi nowadays offer some of the finest ski touring in the country.

Burger's palette of shifting greens used to capture the shadows, pastures and the forested flanks is highly effective. The contrast between the snow-capped summits and the mist above the valley is especially striking in this composition.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

Mont Blanc in winter, Lago Chécrouit, Val d'Aosta, Italy.

oil on panel, 34 x 44 cm.

signed, inscribed on verso: *Vento di Ovest sul Monte Bianco (Colle Chécrouit)*

In English, Abrate's inscription on the back of this panel reads as 'West wind on Mont Blanc' as shown by the clouds and plumes of snow spilling off the summit and its east ridge on an otherwise bright and clear day.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

Mont Blanc as seen from the Lago Chécrouit, Val d'Aosta, Italy.

oil on panel, 34 x 44 cm.

signed, inscribed and dated on verso: *Il laghetto del Chécrouit alla fine dell'inverno (Marzo 1935)*

In this, the second of two similar views (see opposite) winter is clearly over. The Chécrouit lake is in fact more of a large pond and situated at over 2,000 metres near the Colle Chécrouit directly opposite the south face of Mont Blanc. Today, it is easily accessible by a *télécabine* lift from Courmayeur and its view to the north across the wooded Val Vény is spectacular. Seen from this side Mont Blanc's Brouillard and Innominata glaciers and ridges give the enormous mountain a Himalayan character.



Albert Gos (1852-1942)
The Matterhorn looking from Riffelsee, Switzerland.
oil on canvas, 58 x 70 cm.
signed

Albert Gos came from an established Genevan family. He devoted his early years to music and studied the violin under Alexandre Calame’s wife, Amélie Munz-Berger. Despite acclaim at the Geneva Conservatory, Gos turned to painting when he was twenty-two and took lessons for several months from one of Calame’s leading pupils Barthélemy Menn. His instruction overlapped with Ferdinand Hodler who was also one of Menn’s pupils. Gos’s debut picture *Moonlight in the Lauterbrunnen Valley* was hung in the Lausanne Gallery in 1873 followed three years later by a first submission to the Paris Salon in 1876. Gos exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1880 and, subsequently, numerous private and official exhibitions, both in Switzerland and abroad, brought the young painter into prominence. His notable early exhibition was a solo one at the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris in 1895 and one which confirmed his reputation as a *peintre de montagne* and of the best known Valaisan painters of his generation.

Indeed, of all the subjects of which it could be said that Gos made his ‘own’, his prolific Cervin (Matterhorn) pictures were what he became famous for and in Alpine clubs and artistic communities, his name was frequently written as *Albert Gos, Le peintre du Cervin*. Unusually, he made many moonlit views of the mountain too and at the end of 2024, as Keeper of Pictures there, I arranged for the restoration of a large two-metre-high composition, *Claire de lune sur le Cervin*, on behalf of its owners, the Alpine Club (see fig. 1).

The Gos family divided their time between Geneva and Zermatt and Albert’s children became well-known in their respective artistic fields. They were accomplished mountaineers too, especially Charles who made the first unguided ascent of the Zmutt Grat on the Matterhorn’s north face. The eldest son, François followed on from his father as a painter, his brother Charles was a writer and the youngest, Emile a widely revered mountain photographer. The title: *Les Gos, une montagne en heritage* seemed a most suitable one for a retrospective exhibition held in Martigny a few years ago and starting with Albert, the Gos family’s remarkable affinity with the Matterhorn continued for a few generations.

Our summertime *Matterhorn looking from Riffelsee* is as fine an example by Gos as I have seen in many years and a most welcome addition to *Peaks & Glaciers*.



Fig. 1
Claire de lune sur le Cervin,
oil on canvas, 209 x 180 cm.
The Alpine Club, London.

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

*The Jungfrau seen
from Mürren, Bernese
Oberland, Switzerland.*

oil on panel, 45 x 80 cm.
signed



Contencin came from northern France and having survived the First World War when only 17 years old, he trained as an architect and draughtsman. From an early age he began to visit the Alps where he would paint and climb especially in the Savoie and Bernese Oberland. Initially he was employed by the French railways to commission works of art for their respective companies. Although he was technically an amateur artist, he became an active member of

the Paris based *Société des Peintres de Montagne* and painted abundantly throughout his career. His paintings were frequently displayed in regional and national exhibitions. Towards the end of his life, he was the President of the *Société*.

The Lauterbrunnen Valley, Grindelwald and especially the Wengernalp were some of his favourite places to paint and the fact that it was relatively accessible in the

1920s and 1930s via the railway perhaps explains the number of Jungfrau paintings by Contencin one comes across. In all its wintry splendour, this is a beautiful and serene view of the mountain painted from the Mürren side - in fact just to the north of the village towards Grütschalp. The sense of looking across the wide valley, over the abyss beyond the slope is palpable. Indeed, at several points along the west wall of the Lauterbrunnen Valley, the cliffs are over

3,000 feet high. The two hay barns (*Speicher*) made from larch planks add an important burst of colour to contrast with this realm of snow and ice. Over time the sun causes these farmers' buildings to darken and in many ways they are as much a feature of Contencin's pictures as his wide trails in the snow and the tell-tale treads made by ski batons.



Abrate captures the sense of breeze and light falling in and out of shadow in this souvenir from the Lac de Goillet. In a masterful portrayal of a late spring day, the lake is smoothly rendered, and the water seems relatively calm. However, the fluffy clouds and squiggly lines across the snout of the glacier all suggest a rapidly executed painting. Whilst the foreground and smaller mountain beyond the lake are in shadow, the Matterhorn catches the midday sun which intensifies its majestic profile. Using the orange priming to its full effect, Abrate's high mountain sky also conveys a period of stable and high-pressure weather.

**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 well-known 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.

Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

Sunset on the Jungfrau seen from Concordia on the Aletsch Glacier, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on artist's board, 40 x 30 cm.

signed and inscribed on verso: *bought by Rev. E. Mallet Young from Gl. Loppe (after his assistance in the Mont Blanc accident 1866) and by Ed. Young's widow given to me on my wedding, 1917, Geoffrey Winthrop Young,*

This fine Aletsch Glacier picture was illustrated in the 2002 book on Gabriel Loppé written by the late Marie-Nöel Borgeaud and had been passed down through the Young family who were accomplished climbers. Remnants of an exhibition label prove that it was shown in London, but it is uncertain when the Rev. Mallet bought it. The inscription is compelling and not least as it seems likely that Loppé named one of his first ascents in Chamonix (Mont Mallet, first climbed by Loppé and Leslie Stephen in 1873) after Rev. Mallet's deceased younger brother. Letters show that without Loppé and a few others intervening in the 1866 accident they would have all perished. Perhaps more relevant, it was Geoffrey W. Young, the recipient of this picture at his wedding, who got George Mallory into climbing in 1909 and was a mentor to him right up until he disappeared on Mount Everest in 1924.

Shown at sunset looking north up the Aletsch Glacier, the south face of the Jungfrau is flanked to its left by the Rottalhorn. Painted near the Concordia Hut this is a wonderful destination for climbers and ski tourers to this day. For Loppé, it remained a most hallowed spot throughout his life as it was near where he first set foot on a glacier in 1846 accompanied by the Liverpudlian, Beresford Walker.

In a letter written to Sir Alfred Wills in 1909, Loppé wrote about that experience *'I had never been onto the ice except for a few steps taken out of curiosity, and it was a revelation to me when two days later I found myself on the Strahleck Pass between the Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn. It was one of the most vivid impressions of nature that I ever received in the Alps. That was on September 9, 1846 – 63 years ago. I recollect it as plainly as if it were last month.'*





Carl Kessler (1876-1968)

A winter evening in Klosters village, Graubunden, Switzerland.

watercolour, 34.5 x 49 cm.
signed

Plinio Colombi (1873-1951)

The Lauterbrunnen Valley, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 65 x 75 cm.
signed and dated 1941

The V-shaped col between the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn and the Tschingelhorn to its right seems to echo the outstretched branches of the solitary pine tree in this serene mountainscape by Colombi. The view was taken from above Mettlenalp just beyond Wengernalp where the Jungfrau descends into the steep Lauterbrunnen Valley. The thawing snow on the shed's roof suggests a late winter or spring in this accomplished sunlit panorama which relies on delicate areas of ultramarine violet to replicate both the mountain flanks and the shadows of the larger tree out of sight.

**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 Rhônegletscher 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 Gärstehorn and then a few valleys away to the west, one can see those giants of the Aletsch Glacier, the Finsteraarhorn and the Aletschhorn.

**Plinio Colombi (1873-1951)**

Lake Thun near Interlaken, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

watercolour, 53 x 69 cm.
signed and dated 1947

In this connoisseur's watercolour, Colombi used the palest violet washes on the hills and peaks on the opposite side of the lake to create a sense of distance.

One of the cleverest aspects of this ethereal composition is how the mist seems to float above the water from both shores together with the vaguest plume of umber in the water. A dry-brush technique with the lightest touch was used to delineate the leafless alder trees spreading across the entire drawing. This is a *tour de force* by an artist aware of *japonisme* and the economy required to be a successful practitioner of woodcuts.

The higher peaks beyond the snowy hills are the Blümlisalp and the Doldenhorn as seen here from the shore of Lake Thun a few miles to the west from Interlaken.



Sigvard Hansen (1859-1938)

Mürren, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 48 x 73 cm.
signed and dated 1908

Sigvard Marius Hansen was born in Copenhagen where he studied porcelain painting at the Aluminia School of Art and then attended the city's Royal Academy of Art. He travelled through much of northern Europe, visiting England in 1878, when he studied ceramic and glass painting, and again from 1889-90.

He won the Sodrings Prize in 1886, the Danish Royal Academy Medal in 1886, 1893 & 1902, and the Bielke Medal in 1895, and worked as a painter at the Aluminia Porcelain Company until 1882. His paintings were shown at the Charlottenborg Palace from 1882-1938; the Nordic Exhibition, Copenhagen, between 1888 and 1933; the Royal Academy, London, 1889-90; the Nordic Art Exhibition, Lübeck, 1895; and various other exhibitions in Copenhagen and Hamburg. A memorial exhibition was devoted to him in Sollederod in 1974.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Wetterhorn in winter seen from Bort above Grindelwald, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas laid on artist's board, 33 x 46 cm.
signed

The combination of a snowbound farmer's hut with powdery sled tracks and a majestic Alpine summit were often all that Contencin needed in his mountainscapes. The log cabin puts the Wetterhorn's dramatic north face into proportion, but it also adds a sense of isolation up above the valley. A century later this view remains more or less the same to skiers and walkers.



James Hart-Dyke
Towering Matterhorn.
2025, oil on acrylic on
canvas, 55 x 75 cm.



James Hart-Dyke
*Sunrise Matterhorn
from Riffelalp.*
oil on acrylic on
panel, 30 x 42 cm.



Carl Kessler (1876-1968)
*Winter in the Saalbach-Hinterglemm
Valley, Salzburg Alps, Austria.*
watercolour, 34.5 x 49 cm.
signed

The Saalbach-Hinterglemm valley runs east to west on the border between the Tyrolean and the Salzburger Alps in Austria. Neither steep nor elevated in altitude, the region is well known for its forest trails, toboggan runs and unspoilt scenery and like many valleys in the Tyrol, they are normally dead-end routes from off the main road networks. This watercolour represents the view due west at the end of the valley up past Hinterglemm towards a small hamlet beside the Saalach river, Lengau. The distinctive spike-like peak in the background is called Staffkogel.



Adelboden in winter, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on panel, 54 x 73 cm.
signed

Adelboden is in the western part of the Bernese Oberland, in its heartland of agriculture and cheesemaking. With neither altitude nor dramatic peaks in its favour, it is surprising that the village was chosen for the first 'package' ski holidays in the early 1900s. In both winter and summer, Adelboden offers some of the most peaceful and unspoilt aspects of the Bernese Oberland.

Under many feet of snow, the *Speicher* (hay barns), lend a sense of proportion and descending viewpoint to this wide and beautiful composition. Looking south along the Engstligen valley, beside its eponymous thawing river, Contencin depicts the 2,458 -metre Fitzer peak to the right and the plateau-like Wildstrubel in the distance.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

The Laghetto di Licony in winter, Val d'Aosta, Italy.

oil on canvas, 34 x 44 cm.

signed and inscribed and dated on the verso:

(La Grivola) Il Laghetto di Licony (2,500 m)

sopra Courmayeur in primavera (1944)

This is another wartime picture by Abrate and it must have been on an exceptionally clear day as the Grivola mountain is over sixty miles from the Laghetto di Licony which is above and to the east of Courmayeur. The town of Aosta lies between the lake and the background, and the spring panorama of the Aosta Valley would have been remarkable. Abrate's choice of umber and pink tones imbue this picture with warmth and an overall sense of thaw and adieu to winter. The subtle reflection at the southern tip of the lake is particularly pleasing.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Wetterhorn in winter, Grindelwald, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 54.5 x 73 cm.

signed

Contencin's snowbound vision of the Wetterhorn is without doubt one of his most successful compositions. (see p. 31) He chose his viewpoint from just below First, high up on the south side of the Grindelwald valley and, to its right, it still provides one of the great panoramas of the Alps, namely: the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau triumvirate.

Cut off from the valley by a heavy fog, the tiered and soaring Wetterhorn seems to be even more dominant. With a thorough understanding of his palette, in this instance, Contencin animated the fog with flashes of magenta and umber to prevent it becoming too leaden and his sky too boasts areas of yellow ochre and silver to offset the mass of snow and rock. Despite the cold atmosphere, such use of colour means that his paintings never become too hard nor unconvincing.

Carl Kessler (1876-1968)

*Winter in the Klosters Valley,
Graubunden, Switzerland.*

watercolour, 58 x 79 cm.
signed

Looking along the Klosters valley from the side of the Gotschna above Serneus Bad, the Wisshorn and Canardhorn rear up in the background. Kessler was a specialist watercolourist of mountain scenery and worked throughout the Tyrol and the Engadine. Although his pictures seem deceptively simple and softly executed, the wide expanses of snow are formed of many subtle washes, graded to convey the distribution of light on the blanketed meadows and slopes. Kessler favoured clear, cold days and his skies are often dappled with yellow ochre clouds.



Angelo Abrate (1900-1985)

The Rocher du Couvercle and the Couvercle Hut above Chamonix, Savoie, France.

oil on panel, 34 x 44 cm.

signed, inscribed on verso: *Quando non si compiono scalate (Il Rifugio Couvercle) Agosto 1938*

EXHIBITED:

Mostra personale di Bozzetti Alpini dell'alpinista accademico Pittore Angelo Abrate
C.A.I Milano (Centro Alpinistico Italiano) Milan.
20th November -5th December 1942, no. 48

Abrate's inscription on the back of his panel translates as: 'When there is no climbing'. It conjures an image of the painter waiting out a cloudy or inclement day but at the same time, happily working away with a paint box on his knees as was his preferred painting method. Like his forerunner, Gabriel Loppé, the brief statement reveals the duality of his life in the mountains as half-painter and half-climber.

When seen from the Couvercle Hut the enormous bowl of the Glacier du Géant lives up to its name in size and scale. In this instance most of Mont Blanc is covered in cloud but Abrate created here a superb impression of one of the best panoramas in the Alps.

At just under 2,700 metres the location takes a decent glacier traverse and some exposed sets of ladders to get to, and thus the view rewards the more dedicated walker and climber. The first refuge -seen here-was built on the original bivouac site under the Rocher du Couvercle, the obelisk-like rock overhanging it. In 1952, a new refuge was built seventy metres away on a promontory overlooking the Mer de Glace and the Tacul and Talèfre glaciers.





James Hart-Dyke
First light Matterhorn.
2022-24, oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm.



Albert Lugardon (1827-1909)
Rooftops in winter, Geneva, Switzerland.
oil on paper laid on panel, 34 x 49.5 cm.
signed indistinctly lower right



Fig. 2
The Jungfrau, oil on canvas, 96 x 140 cm. Private collection,
Switzerland, *Peaks & Glaciers*, 2010, John Mitchell Fine Paintings.

This wintry study in oils was painted from Lugardon's studio window in the *vieille ville* area of the city. The Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva has another sketch by Lugardon of the same view but seen in summer. The villages of Cologny and Collonge-Bellerive can be seen on the south shore of the lake far off to the right. The rooftops bound in snow are reminiscent of Gustave Caillebotte's Paris scenes painted in the 1870s. Together with Gabriel Loppé, the Geneva-born Albert Lugardon studied for a year in Alexandre Calame's studio and between 1849 and 1851 he went to the Louvre to copy Old Master paintings under Barthélemy Menn's tutelage. He travelled extensively within Switzerland spending every summer from 1865 onwards painting either in the Bernese Oberland or in the Valais where, in stark contrast to this more personal oil sketch, he made some large format Alpine landscapes including the one which featured in our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibition in 2008 (see fig. 2) His paintings can be seen in the major museums of Bern, Geneva, Zurich and Luzern and towards the mid 1880's Lugardon began to experiment with photography and the *Moment-Photographie* movement in London and Geneva.



Alexandre Calame (1810-1864)
Cliffs near Seelisberg, Lake Luzern, Switzerland.
oil on paper, 32 x 40 cm.
signed and inscribed on the verso: A mon ami Eugène Felix souvenir affectueux Calame. circa 1861

LITERATURE
V. Anker, *Calame Vie et oeuvre* (1987), p.453, no.762

This fine study in oils comes from the studio sale of the artist’s works held a year after Calame’s death in Paris’s Hôtel Drouot. The sale was conducted over two days and included 650 lots, mostly oil studies with two hundred or so drawings. It bears repeating that Calame never sold his studies and drawings in his lifetime and the rediscovery of this daring and modern sketch reveals to what extent he was devoted to working *en plein air*. In this instance, perched high up above Lake Luzern the painter was even risking life and limb. Defying the elements, the trees growing at the edge of the cliffs – one dead and one alive - correspond to Calame’s vision of man’s place in the world, dwarfed here by the twin peaks of the Mythen in the far distance to right. This composition is similar in style and execution to his vertiginous view of cliffs entitled *Falaises de Seelisberg* from 1861 now in the Oskar Reinhart Sammlung in Winterthur (see fig 3). The latter oil study was one of the highlights of the 1993 exhibition held in the National Gallery, *Caspar David Friedrich to Ferdinand Hodler: A Romantic Tradition Nineteenth-Century Paintings and Drawings from the Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur*. It was here that this writer first encountered Calame.

Fig. 3
Falaises de Seelisberg, oil on canvas on card, 32 x 52 cm.
The Oskar Reinhart Foundation, Winterthur, Switzerland.





Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

Ringgenberg on Lake Brienz seen from Interlaken in winter, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland.

oil on canvas, 48 x 75 cm.

signed

Loppé first encountered the *haute-montagne* when on a summer painting school in Meiringen in 1846, over thirty years before he painted this wintry scene by the banks of the Aare River where it empties into the nearby Lake Brienz. In January 1877 Leslie Stephen and Loppé met in Bern for their first winter trip to the Bernese Oberland. They headed for the Lauterbrunnen Valley and afterwards to Meiringen where they visited the 'King of the mountain guides' Melchior Anderegg who was not only Leslie Stephen's favourite guide but also one of Loppé's preferred travelling companions too. For over two weeks, with Melchior Anderegg in tow for the harder passages, Loppé and Stephen roamed the secluded valleys, passes and glaciers of the Oberland, getting as far south as Grimsel. Loppé discovered the charms of Interlaken and Meiringen and re-acquainted himself with Grindelwald, a village which became a firm favourite like Zermatt and Chamonix for years to come.

The journey was deemed such a success that for the next twenty-five years, hardly a January or February passed when Loppé did not revisit that part of the Bernese Oberland with his family and friends, often retracing those same itineraries from that initial voyage.

With great skill Loppé captures here the deep and set-in cold amidst the shrubbery and reedy shallows beside the river. Two boats can be made out far off in the middle of the Brienzersee.



Louis Gianoli (1868-1951)
*The Dent Blanche seen from Les Haudères,
Val d'Hérens, Valais, Switzerland.*
oil on canvas, 43 x 55 cm.
signed

Seen from any angle, the Dent Blanche is a stand-alone, majestic high mountain that, rising to 4537 metres, dwarfs its surroundings. The Swiss painter Gianoli painted this late afternoon view from the other side of the valley, at the southern end of the Val d'Hérens in a small hamlet called les Haudères. It is a remote location even today, especially in deep winter.

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