



Peaks & Glaciers

2018

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST. 1931

Peaks & Glaciers

2018

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

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I am very pleased to be sending out this catalogue to accompany our annual selling exhibition of paintings, drawings and vintage photographs of the Alps. Although this now represents our seventeenth winter of *Peaks & Glaciers*, as always, my sincere hope is that it will bring readers the same pleasure that this author derives from sourcing and identifying the pictures that are offered.



The cataloguer on La Meije, Massif des Ecrins, France, September 2017

One of the more frequent questions asked by visitors to these exhibitions in the gallery is where do all these pictures come from? The short answer is: predominantly from the countries in Europe that boast a good portion of the Alps within their borders, namely France, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

When measured on a world scale, the European Alps occupy the 38th position in geographical size, and yet they receive over one and a half million visitors annually. In researching my forthcoming book on Gabriel Loppé, I was interested to read a contemporary account of mountaineering in 1885 and to be reassured that the Alps have been attracting all kinds of tourists for well over one hundred and fifty years: *'Probably more mountains have been ascended in the past season than in any previous one. The number of mountains of all kinds, good, bad and indifferent, was larger than it had ever been before, and the holiday-makers filled every resort to overflowing. We have heard of a case in which two friends arriving at a mountain inn could obtain no better bed than the billiard table, and one was charged 5 fr. for sleeping upon it, and the other 4 fr. for sleeping under it...The Engadine was even more crowded than usual, and Zermatt and the hotels on the Riffel were crammed. So, too, Chamonix, and the hotel at the Montenvert was more popular than ever... Among tourists in general the passion for going up mountains seemed to be developed to a preposterous extent.'* (from Trevor Braham's *When the Alps Cast Their Spell: Mountaineers of the Alpine Golden Age*. London 2004).

There is no denying who was responsible for such an influx of outsiders: the English pioneers of the golden age of climbing who went on to form the Alpine Club in 1857.

By the early 1860s, many of the 4,000 metre peaks in the Alps had already been conquered. From the mid-1850s the Club's founding members, the leading alpinists of their generation, waged a major campaign to claim as many of the mountains for themselves thereby enhancing the Alpine Club's elite standing. Their ventures filled the record books during those early years: between 1854 and 1865 thirty-six alpine summits above 4,000 metres were reached for the first time, and thirty-one of them by British 'peak bagger' parties. Although these first ascents received the lion's share of admiration and respect from a fascinated public, it is worth remembering how many high-altitude traverses and passes - *cols* - were established as well as one hundred and twenty other 'lesser' mountains that were added to the tally. In his *Victorian Mountaineers*, the author Ronald Clark comments on the Club's 'assumption of superiority' that fitted well into the spirit of the age. Clark observes: *'The Alpine Club therefore assumed, at its inception, a certain curatorial rightness - in which it had, after all, it must be admitted, almost every possible claim.'*

Looking at a cross-section of the Alpine Club's members by the 1870s reveals a bias towards urban professionals. Together with a good number of the landed gentry, the majority were lawyers followed by the clergy, university dons and schoolmasters. Half of them were university educated, which equipped the Alpine Club with a distinct intellectual and academic identity. It was no coincidence that so many climbers came from towns and cities; the environmental onslaught of the Industrial Revolution had provoked a re-appreciation of the countryside, fresh air and, in the tamest sense, wilderness. The Alpine Club offered a gateway to 'organized' adventure; emancipation for the city-bound spirit. And for every visit made to the Alps, where possible, a painting, engraving or photograph was usually purchased in the form of a souvenir. By the end of the nineteenth century, the demand for Alpine imagery far outstripped the supply, which helps explain the baffling quantity of indifferent pictures of the Matterhorn, the Wetterhorn, Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau and so forth, still to be found today.

As the leading specialist in Alpine paintings and photographs, I remain proud to have handled some very fine pictures of the Swiss and French Alps since our inaugural exhibition in 2001. However, I am also aware that, in keeping with every exhibition, by making quality, topographical accuracy and diversity of subject matter the overriding priorities, the stakes have risen: there are now more buyers and enthusiasts of Alpine art than ever before but sourcing the good material requires a greater commitment of time, expertise and travel. Regardless of where or how each picture is being offered for sale, the real challenge to me is, in fact, what to buy. It bears repeating that the source of each painting is mostly irrelevant when assessing its merits for a Peaks & Glaciers exhibition. Although there are several specialist websites that track auction prices throughout the world and whose information is undeniably useful as guide to values overall, they can, however, be quite misleading. For example, a successful artist like Charles-Henri Contencin painted a few thousand pictures over his career, which was not an unusual quantity for a professional artist. A specialist 'mountain art' auction in Paris last December offered half a dozen paintings by Contencin, and all bar one, exceeded their pre-sale estimates many times. One panel, representing the village of Le Tour, near Chamonix, under heavy snow, (SEE FIG 1) made nearly €25,000 over an estimate of €5-6,000. Like Gabriel Loppé, demand for Contencin's work has increased considerably over the



FIG 1
Charles-Henri Contencin
Le Tour

last decade and, yet, despite an impressive number of Contencins for sale here, none of those paintings from the Paris auction feature in this year's exhibition, for reasons of both quality and relevance. The buying policy is twofold. It lies in identifying hitherto lesser known artists of sufficient ability to merit inclusion in Peaks & Glaciers, and telling the story of the discovery of the Alps through art - in any medium. As well as continuing to broaden my knowledge of the core specialist 'peintre-alpiniste' artists, such as Charles-Henri Contencin, Gabriel Loppé, E.T. Compton and Jacques Fourcy, I am constantly on the look-out for views of the lesser known valleys and regions of the Swiss and French Alps, in particular. This year, it is therefore pleasing to have found some interesting views painted and photographed in the beautiful Zinal and Val d'Hérens valleys but, at the same time, there are no fewer than six Zermatt subjects to choose from, as well as many newcomers to the fold.

Last September, I experienced a week of cold but settled weather whilst climbing in the Massif des Ecrins (FIG 2). The mountain huts were preparing to close up, and there was a distinct *fin de saison* feel throughout the valleys. For several days, my ever-patient friend and mountain guide, Anthony Franklin, and I hardly saw more than a dozen souls. On each climb, I seemed to be spending more and more time looking at the horizon - the panoramas - scanning the peaks, glaciers and valleys for mountains that I could recognize - or not, as the case might be.

It would be hard to justify, in Leslie Stephen's words, 'all those lungfuls of fresh air' as a sufficient excuse to research these catalogues, but it certainly reminded me why the artists featured in this catalogue returned again and again, often to the same valleys armed with paper, canvas, panels as well as photographic glass plates - in lieu of a slim iphone.

WJ Mitchell
January 2018

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.

Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)*The Wetterhorn in winter, Grindelwald, Switzerland*

oil on canvas

23½ x 28¾in (60 x 73cm)

signed

Contencin's snowbound vision of the Wetterhorn is without doubt one of his most successful compositions. For this picture, 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.

The two log cabins put the Wetterhorn's north face into proportion but it also adds a sense of isolation. Cut off from the valley by a heavy fog, the tiered and soaring mountain 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.





Toni Haller (1907-1944)

The Tour Ronde and Grand Capucin, Mont Blanc Massif, Chamonix, France

oil on canvas

31¼ x 25½in (81 x 65cm)

signed

Toni Haller had a *nom de plume*, Hans Sterbik, that he often signed his pictures with. He was born in Vienna and often, painted in the Tyrol, the Carinthian Alps and, most of all, in the Dolomites. He seems to have favoured sunsets and had a fondness for mountainscapes with heavy snowfall. This is the first Haller to feature in *Peaks & Glaciers*, but also one of his rarer pictures; a scene from the Mont Blanc massif. Haller's viewpoint was from below the Pyramide du Tacul which lies over halfway between the Aiguille du Midi and the Tour Ronde and Col du Géant, the border between France and Italy. This is a sparse, high-altitude view and painted with considerable skill. The painter's handling of light and tone- with such a restricted palette- suggests this was not a one-off glacier picture even for an artist more renowned for his 'valley floor' paintings. More works by Haller of this calibre would be most desirable.



Florentin Charnaux (1832-1883)

Climbers on the summit of Mont Blanc, France

albumen print

7¼ x 10in (18.5 x 25.7cm)

circa 1885



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

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

oil on panel
10½ x 16in (27 x 41cm)
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 peaks still offer some spectacular climbing with a lighter footfall of visitors in the late summer season. The Glacier Blanc which tumbles off the north-east face of the highest mountain in the Dauphiné, the Barre des Ecrins (4102m), extends for over three miles down into the Pelvoux Valley. With so much white paint required, Contencin used thick streams of impasto to delineate the glacier's ridges and crevasses caught in direct sunlight. In a painterly manner, the artist balanced his picture's composition by smudging the cerulean blue sky with a plume of cloud billowing off the 'Barre's' summit.



Arthur Gardner (1882-1940)

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

silver gelatin print, 1927
8¼ x 6¼in (21 x 16cm)

In the preface for his 1927 book, *The Art and Sport of Alpine Photography*, Arthur Gardner wrote: 'To look at the hills with the eye of a photographer is the next best thing to studying them with the eye of a painter. We cannot all learn to draw, but we can most of us learn to use our eyes more and more, and the camera may help us to do so.'

This is an original photograph taken for the publication. Although the book contains a considerable amount of technical detail it was written principally for the amateur practitioner.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Wetterhorn in winter seen from Bort, Grindelwald, Switzerland

oil on canvas

18½ x 25½in (46.5 x 65cm)

signed

Contencin painted this view of the Wetterhorn's north face looking from a farmer's hay lofts at Bort which is a two hour walk up from Grindelwald. The mountain was one of his preferred subjects in all seasons. The sweep of cart tracks in the snow and stands of fir trees were used to maximum effect to create a depth and space over the cloudy valley with its lofty mountain beyond. The clearer sky above the peak adds warmth to the composition but also, crucially, softens the afternoon's atmosphere to enhance the distance from the wooded grove in the foreground – and the one behind the viewer as indicated by the lengthening shadows of trees across the snowfield.



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 wide, established snow in the foreground is the key to both the composition's success and its visual appeal.

Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Dent Blanche seen from the Balcon du Val d'Hérens, Evolène, Switzerland

oil on panel
19¼ x 26¾in (49 x 68cm)
signed

Thomas S. Kennedy was only twenty-one when he made the first ascent of the Dent Blanche and having made an aborted winter attempt on the Matterhorn that same year, he was supposed to have been part of Whymper's successful but tragic first Matterhorn climb in 1865 too. An early member of the Alpine Club, Kennedy must have remembered climbing the formidable Dent Blanche with great pride. And nor does the peak offer any undemanding routes up it. Seen from any angle, it is a stand-alone, beautiful high mountain that, rising to 4537 metres, dwarfs its surroundings. Contencin painted this majestic view from the other side of the valley, at the southern end of the Val d'Hérens. It is a remote location, especially in deep winter as per this mountainscape. The scene is also enhanced in this case by the painter's ability, time and again, to create a feeling of a receding panorama with his starkly shadowed foreground.





Jacques Fourcy (1906-1990)

*Crevasses on the Glacier du Géant with the
Tour Ronde in the distance, Chamonix, France*
oil on panel
22 ½ x 30 ½in (57 x 77cm)
signed

Fourcy learnt to paint by himself. He relied exclusively on a palette knife generously loaded with paint to recreate the seracs, glaciers and couloirs so familiar to him as a *peintre-alpiniste*. His unusual technique proved highly successful; it meant he could create blank areas of smoothed over paint broken up by thick layers and whorls of impasto and on closer inspection with fingertips, the paint surfaces ripple with eddies and lines. It took considerable skill to avoid over saturating the colour and tone. Fourcy's experience from a lifetime's climbing gave him, like Loppé in particular, an advantage in calculating the strength of shadows at altitude; his

foregrounds tend to juxtapose the receding composition perfectly. In this instance, the spiky Aiguille d'Entrèves and the Tour Ronde far off to the right seem an appropriately long way away across the tumbling ice-fields.

As an engineer by training, Fourcy had a successful career working for the French railway network before enlisting in the army. Despite losing an eye in WWII in 1940 and spending five years in a Rhineland prisoner of war camp, he was the longest active member of the *Société des Peintres de Montagne*, exhibiting every year from 1925 to 1990. His work erred towards drama rather than atmosphere.



Bruno Wehrli and Brothers (1867-1927)

Mürren, Switzerland.
silver gelatin print
15 x 11¼in (38.2 x 28.7cm)
circa 1895

Willy Burger (1882-1964)

The Dents de Veisivi and the Dent d'Hérens seen from Eison, Val d'Hérens, Switzerland

oil on panel

8¾ x 10½in (22 x 27cm)

signed and inscribed on verso: *Vue d'Eison 22. Aug. 53*

The colours in this high summer oil study on panel belong to a dedicated Alpine painter. Even if Burger's oil paintings rarely feature in *Peaks & Glaciers*, his juxtaposition of purples and misty greens are most original and, equally, betray a wider knowledge of the earlier practitioners in this genre, such as Alexandre Calame. The Dents de Veisivi are seen from the north-east in this instance and a midday sun has caused the hint of a haze to develop from below. Settled at the end of the Val d'Hérens, the hamlet of Eison is little changed today and it is tempting to discover how many of the valley farmer's buildings seen in this picture still stand today. 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.





Willy Burger (1882-1964)

The Weisshorn, Zermatt, Switzerland

pencil on paper, 10 x 14½in (25.5 x 37cm)

signed, inscribed and dated: *Riffelberg 30.viii.45*

This fine drawing was certainly a preparatory study for a large oil painting by Burger which featured in our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibition in 2015 (pp. 42 & 43, see fig 3)

Curiously, paintings and drawings of the Weisshorn do not appear very often and this drawing is a welcome addition to our *Peaks & Glaciers* exhibitions since its debut in 2001.

For many climbers and devotees of the Alps, the Weisshorn is with little doubt (nor this author's!) the most beautiful and classic of all the major peaks. At 4,506 metres, it is the fifth highest mountain in Western Europe. First climbed by John Tyndall in 1861, the Weisshorn remains a tough and, above all, very long climb by any of its three prominent ridges. The Anglo-Irish physicist, John Tyndall, made the remarkable first ascent four years before the less challenging and lower Matterhorn was conquered and, yet, so few pictures of the Weisshorn seem to be recorded. The explanation lies perhaps in its lofty location, out of sight from much of the Zermatt and

Zinal valley floors. Its splendour and terrific height can only be appreciated from high up and at quite a distance.

As noted in the inscription, Burger made this detailed sketch from Riffelberg. Directly opposite, across the Mattertal valley, is the Mettelhorn with its distinctive ramp – a long but popular day climb from Zermatt. Above it, the Weisshorn takes centre stage with its final narrow and exposed summit ridge visible on the right-hand side.



FIG 1
Willy Burger



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

A cloud study at the Col du Géant, Chamonix, France

oil on board

12 x 16in (30 x 40cm)

signed and dated: 31.08.77

This oil study comes from a pioneering painting expedition that Loppé undertook in 1877 with his daughter, Aline. The idea was to spend several consecutive days and nights staying on their own on the Col du Géant which straddles the frontier between France and Italy. Characteristically, Loppé 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 and defying the fierce storms and isolation 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.

Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)*La Jonction: the Bossons and Taconnaz Glaciers on Mont Blanc, France*

oil on canvas

19¾ x 14½in (50.2 x 36.8cm)

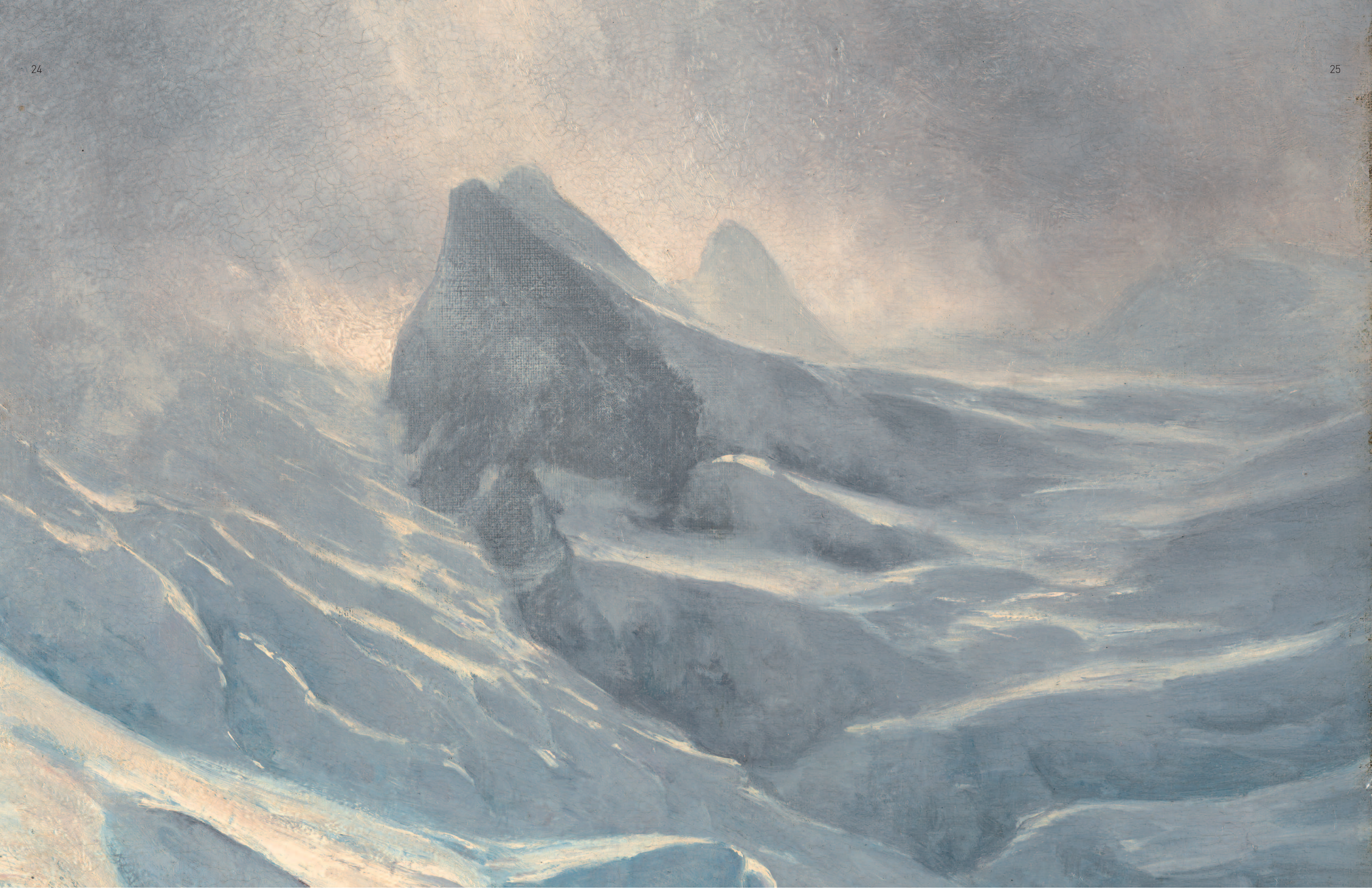
signed and dated 1890

Loppé first climbed up to *La Jonction* in July 1852, when taking his first wife, Marguerite Bachet as far as the Grands Mulets hut in the first year of their marriage. A decade later, he spent nine days up at the hut and, by then, aside from the hut's warden and a core group of Chamonix's more tenacious guides, Loppé had become more than just a regular visitor over the preceding summers. Early photographs by the likes of Adolphe Braun show the painter at work on the cabin's rudimentary terrace or perched on the surrounding rocks. With his parasol and easel in place, Loppé looks completely at ease as if he had momentarily stepped out of his own chalet. Working in both oils and pencil, Loppé sketched whenever the weather cooperated, producing a flow of work which was subsequently carried back down to Chamonix.

Nearly forty years later, then in his late sixties, Loppé still undertook the round trip to the Grands Mulets Hut which consists of a long and steep path that winds up through the larch forest on the Montagne de la Côte, followed by a long glacier traverse and ascent. Conducted at a vigorous pace, Loppé's regular excursions to *La Jonction*, (2589 metres) where the *Bossons and Taconnaz* glaciers meet and on to the Grands Mulets Hut (3051 metres) involved several hours of walking and climbing. This route was the original way to the summit of Mont Blanc and even if it remains one of the most popular 'endurance' walks in Chamonix, the view from up there is spectacular.

Beyond the fearful and looming crevasse in this upright composition, the Grands Mulets rocks, home to the *réfuge* today, and, behind it, the Rocher Pitschner dominate the middle distance. Mont Blanc's Dôme de Gouter scarcely comes into view on the far right, behind Loppé's masterful rendering of swirling snow and cloud. The painter was known to have studied early monochromatic photographs covering all kinds of seracs and fissures in the glaciers, but the pigments he used to depict ice and snow of varying ages were unique. The requisite formula of blues, greens and white in a 'Loppé crevasse' were his long-held secret. The three footsteps in the bottom left of the painting subtly suggest the artist's presence, perched with his easel above *La Jonction*, returning to a favourite subject that few people alive at the time knew better than himself.







Gabriel Loppé (1825 -1913)

The Matterhorn in summer as seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland

oil on board, 16 x 12in (40 x 30cm)

signed

Towards the end of the 1850s, Loppé began to explore Zermatt getting to know its mountains and valleys and, right from the outset, he was deeply attracted to this Valais hinterland and its remarkable setting. Despite its relative remoteness, he would travel there almost annually for the next half century. 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 in the long run and Loppé's paintings played no small part in restoring the Alps' popularity. And, with a fast-growing eye for business, Loppé realized that the Matterhorn'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.

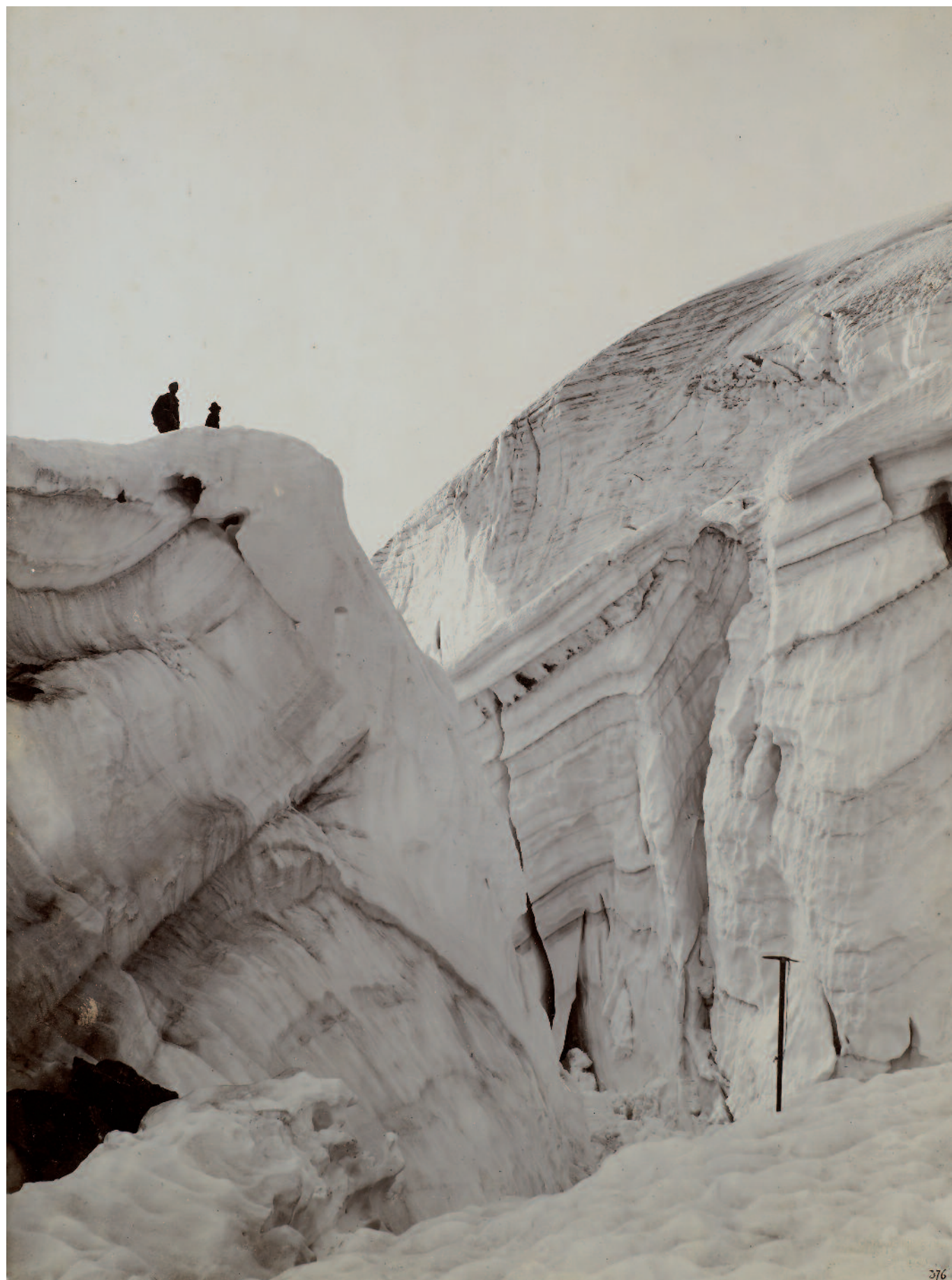


Arthur Gardner (1882 - 1940)

The Zinal Valley with the Grand Cornier and Dent Blanche, Switzerland

silver gelatin print, 1927

6¼ x 8¼in (16 x 21cm)



Vittorio Sella (1859-1943)

Climbers above a crevasse on the Gabelhorn Glacier, Switzerland

silver gelatin print

15 x 11¼in (38.2 x 28.7cm)

dry signature stamp, numbered 376

Circa 1900

Vittorio Sella was the nephew of Quintino Sella, the founder of the Italian Alpine Club. Born in Piedmont, he was not only the finest *photographe-alpiniste* of his generation but possibly of all time. He was certainly the most accomplished mountaineer to have wielded a camera before 1900. He had begun experimenting with dry photographic plates in 1880 and combined his photographic skills with his interest in climbing. In 1882, as well as making the first 360-degree panoramic photograph from the summit of the Matterhorn, he made the first winter traverse of Mont Blanc, the first winter ascent of the Matterhorn and, two years later, that of Monte Rosa. He went on to climb several other 4,000 metre peaks also in winter and considered Alpine conditions at that time of year: 'when the great cold cleanses the air' as the finest for photography. Sella accompanied Queen Margherita of Italy to the top of Monte Rosa's Punta Gnifetti in 1893 but also made many exploratory expeditions abroad. These resulted in superb collections of photographs and his two most famous trips were to Uganda's Rwenzori mountains in 1906 and the Karakoram in 1909 where he was accompanied by his sponsor, Luigi Amedeo, the Duke of Abruzzi. Sella's silver gelatin prints always feature prominently in any exhibition concentrating on mountain photography but his splendid photographs rarely appear on the market. Today, most of his work can be found in the *Fondazione Sella* in his hometown of Biella.



This beautiful view of the Matterhorn was painted when Loppé was in his mid-seventies; a veteran mountaineer and an internationally recognized painter but, equally, somebody with a deep and long-held attachment to Zermatt. Curiously, Loppé never climbed the mountain itself although it was well within his ability. Instead, he preferred to paint it from the Swiss side and the Italian side, and from both close and afar. He knew its now world famous jagged profile intimately and also, from over half a century of gazing at it – from the summit of a neighbouring peak or from down on the glaciers -he understood, how often the solitary mountain top clouds over as the afternoon draws on, especially in the summer.

In this *Matterhorn*, painted on Bastille Day, a recent but heavy snowfall is thawing and the snow is sloughing off the rocks to the left of the lake below the north side of the Riffelhorn. The lake looks out of season: wintry and rippled by the afternoon breezes under a billowing sky. Loppé considered nearly all the pictures that were painted *en plein air* in the mountains as *tableaux* worthy of display in public on their own and some of his exhibitions at the Alpine Club in the 1870s, 1890s and early 1900s would boast over fifty pictures with hardly a single scene painted in the studio. If a collector, student or general enthusiast of nineteenth century landscape painting were asked to define the characteristics of a *plein air* oil sketch, this single study, with its shifting light and sense of atmosphere, would provide all the answers needed. Loppé could rely on a lifetime's experience in the mountains, to be able to paint this convincingly, whether on a 4 metre canvas or a 40 centimetre wide piece of board like this.

Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

The Matterhorn in July as seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland

oil on board, 12 x 16in (30 x 40cm)

signed and dated: 14.07.98



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

The Lyskamm and the Gorner Glacier, Zermatt, Switzerland

gelatin silver bromide print

7 x 4¾in (17.5 x 12cm)

with dry signature stamp

1881

inscribed on verso: *au pied du Mont Rose, La Lyskam dans la distance.*

Zozo et la grand maman sur le glacier de Gorner. Benoit Simon guide.

17 juillet 1898. Vallée de Zermatt.

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.

Consistent with the individualist streak that steered Loppé through his life, he assimilated the fundamentals of photography largely by himself. By the time he came into contact with 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 which culminated in him taking his famous photograph of the Eiffel Tower struck by lightning in 1902.

On a painting trip to Engelberg in January 1891, Loppé made the following diary entry: 'At 8.30 in the evening I went out to take snaps under the moonlight, -13 degrees at 9 o' clock.' The following night he wrote: 'At 9 o'clock in the evening a ¾ negative in the Engelberg cemetery -15 degrees by 10 o'clock.'

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*.

In truth, he never considered his photography anything more than an obsessive hobby he had come to later in his life. He never sold any of his prints but its novelty readily appealed to an extrovert who lived and breathed challenges and innovation. He summarized his approach to the art form in characteristic modesty; "I started to take a few photographs, most of all to have some memories of my grandchildren."

The three figures in the middle ground of this rare photograph, taken three days after he painted: *The Matterhorn in July as seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland*. (see p. ?) are Loppé's wife, Bessie, one of his granddaughters, Josphine, and their family guide, Benoit Simond.





E.T. Compton (1849-1921)

The Zinal Valley with the Grand Cornier and Dent Blanche, Switzerland

watercolour

9¾ x 14½in (24.5 x 36.7cm)

signed and inscribed: *Barneuza*

The viewpoint for this first-rate watercolour by Compton is located at Barneuza Alpage (2211 metres) high up on the pastures above Ayer, the other side of the Zinal Valley from Grimetz. Looking towards the south, Monte Besso on the left is flanked by the imposing Dent Blanche across the valley. The Obergabelhorn and the Dent d'Hérens rise up at the top of the furthest glaciers.

Opportunities to collect watercolours by Compton of this quality and finesse are increasingly rare. With a preference for lavender or violet colours and light washes of bodycolour, their delicacy can be susceptible to fading. Nonetheless, a perfectly preserved drawing such as this Valais panorama thoroughly reiterates how superior Compton's skill was in this medium. Few painters could match his gift for conveying the high mountain atmosphere and light in these watercolours.



Florentin Charnaux (1832-1883)

Climbers at La Jonction, Mont Blanc, France

albumen print

7¼ x 10in (18.5 x 25.7cm)

circa 1885

The Charnaux brothers were some of the earliest practitioners of mountain photography and as contemporaries of the Bisson brothers, they operated from a studio established in Geneva in 1860. This impeccably well-preserved collodion print was taken at the base of the Bossons Glacier on the way up to Mont Blanc. From a practical point of view, Charnaux would have used mules and porters to carry the heavy glass plates, camera and other tools as far as the ice-fields.



Carl Moos (1878-1959)

Piz Palu, Bellavista and Piz Bernina, the Engadine, Switzerland

lithograph laid on linen

18 x 32½in (46 x 83cm)

signed

This stunning view of the Bernina Massif is a hitherto unpublished or recorded 'design' by this leading graphic artist. More importantly, it is the first lithograph for sale to feature in *Peaks & Glaciers* and, crucially, is in an excellent state of preservation. It would be hard to find a more original nor striking sheet to mark our foray into this interesting and appealing area of collecting.

Born in Munich, Moos worked as an illustrator, graphic designer and stage designer before rising to prominence as a founding member of 'Die Sechs' ('the six'), a Munich based poster artists group. In 1916 he moved to Zurich where he secured his reputation, producing posters for several Swiss and international sporting competitions, most notably the 1928 Winter Games in St. Moritz.



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. The Obergabelhorn above Zermatt is just visible over Monte Besso's right ridge and below, the river Navissence can be seen meandering its way along the valley from where it flows into the Rhône at Sierre.

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.



Leonardo Roda (1868-1933)

Dawn on the Theodul Pass, Zermatt, Switzerland

oil on panel

12½ x 18¾in (32 x 47.5cm)

signed, and dated: 15.8.14

As a prominent member of the Italian Alpine Club, Roda was a self-taught *peintre-alpiniste* who excelled in both disciplines. Based out of Valtournenche, he specialized in paintings of the Aosta and Zermatt valleys. He is perhaps best known for his series of Matterhorn pictures, done in 1906 from the mountain's Italian side, recording the peak in all seasons of the year, now in Turin's *Museo Nazionale della Montagna Duca degli Abruzzi*. In this lyrical work on panel, the Klein Matterhorn and the Breithorn behind it, catch the glow of a summer sun's first rays. The picture is thinly painted but with a warm palette and Roda used heavy *impasto* to skilfully model the rocks in the foreground.

A marvellous and richly painted sky pulls together this early morning mountainscape. Contencin depicted the gelid snow-fields in the foreground with suitably purple and pink hues as the Matterhorn's east face, bathed in sunshine, presides over the whole scene. Although the handling of the light hitting the peaks' vertiginous north face is first-rate, this highly familiar and much attempted view is enriched by the deft placing of the two huts, angled on to the slope in such a way that the hallowed mountain can be placed right of centre in the composition, creating balance and a sense of crevassed emptiness in the space in between.



Charles-Henri Contencin (1898-1955)

The Matterhorn after sunrise, Zermatt, Switzerland
oil on canvas
23½ x 28¾in (60 x 73cm)
signed



Georges Tairraz II (1900-1975)

Skiers in Megève, France

silver gelatin print

22½ x 19in (57 x 48cm)

studio stamp on verso, circa 1940

For over four generations the Tairraz family were mountain guides and photographers based in Chamonix. In 1857, on a trip to the dentist in Geneva, Joseph Tairraz (1827-1902) bought an early Daguerrotype camera. He began taking portraits of family members and tourists in Chamonix and, accompanied by Gabriel Loppé, four years later, in 1861, he took one of the earliest known stereoscopic photographs of Mont Blanc. Subsequent sons and grandsons, namely Georges I, Georges II and Pierre who only died in 2000, continued the tradition as well as making mountaineering films. Today, original Tairraz photographs, including reprints from the old negatives and plates, are the most published and sought after of all the early Chamonix views.



Georges Tairraz II (1900-1975)

The Eglise Sainte-Marie-Madeleine de Praz-sur-Arly, Chamonix, France

silver gelatin print

15 x 11¼in (38.2 x 28.7cm)

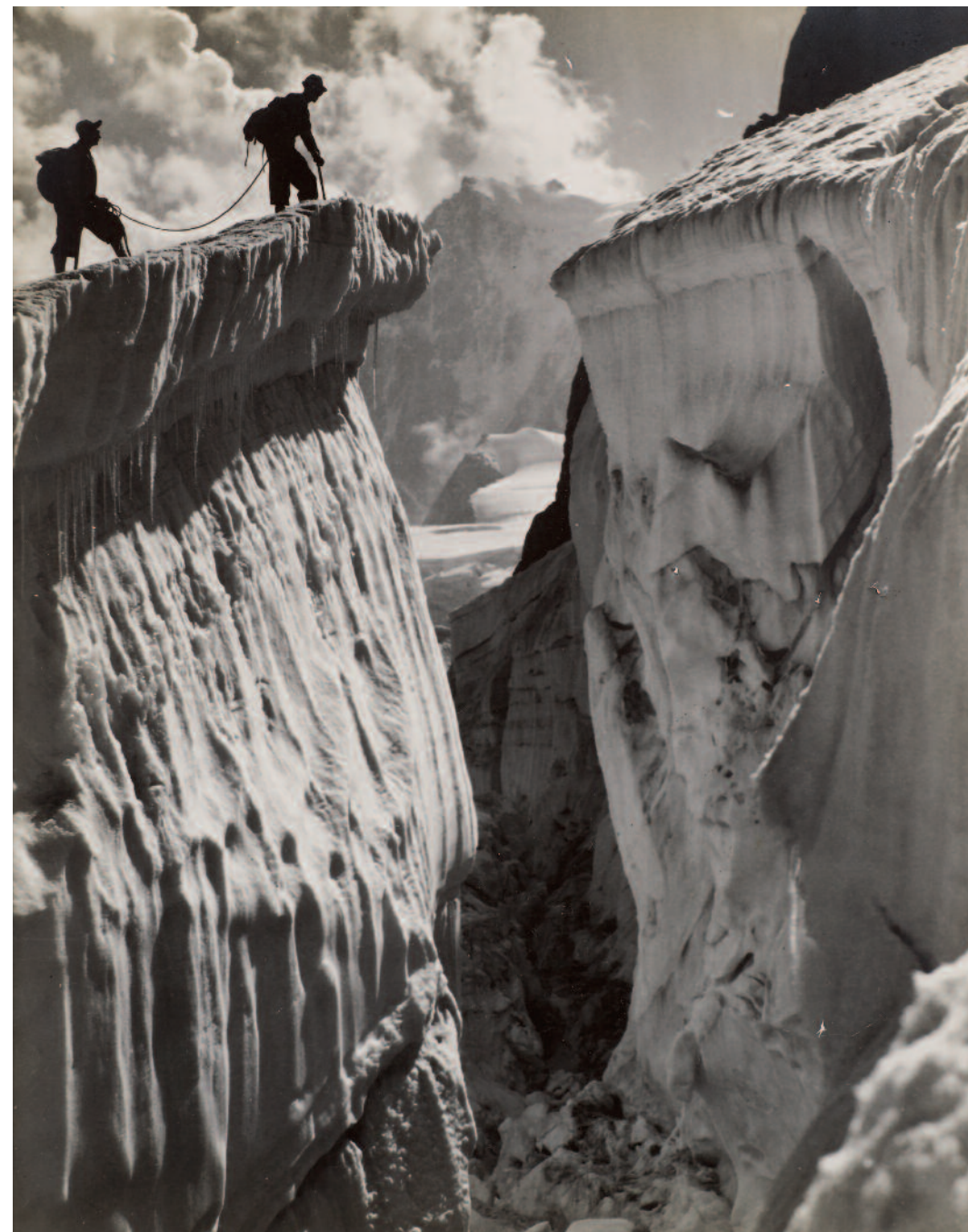
studio stamp on verso



Georges Tairraz II (1900-1975)

The Aiguille Verte seen from Le Brévent, Chamonix, France

silver gelatin print
11¼ x 15in (28.7 x 38.2cm)
studio stamp on verso



Georges Tairraz II (1900-1975)

The Requin Glacier, Chamonix, France

silver gelatin print
15 x 11¼in (38.2 x 28.7cm)
studio stamp on verso

Georges Tairraz II (1900-1975)

Two climbers traversing the Aiguille du Midi and Aiguille du Plan, Chamonix, France

silver gelatin print

22½ x 19in (57 x 48cm)

with studio stamp on verso, 1932

This is one of Tairraz's best known and reproduced photographs. Two valleys away, the Grandes Jorasses seem to mirror the spiky tower the climbers will shortly have to turn during their traverse. The massive cornice they are standing on defies gravity but best of all is Tairraz's viewpoint; the photographer was separated from his companions by an airy gulf and the mist in the foregrounds gives the composition its fair share of drama.





Carl Kessler (1876-1968)

The Arlberg Hospiz, St. Christoph am Arlberg, Austria

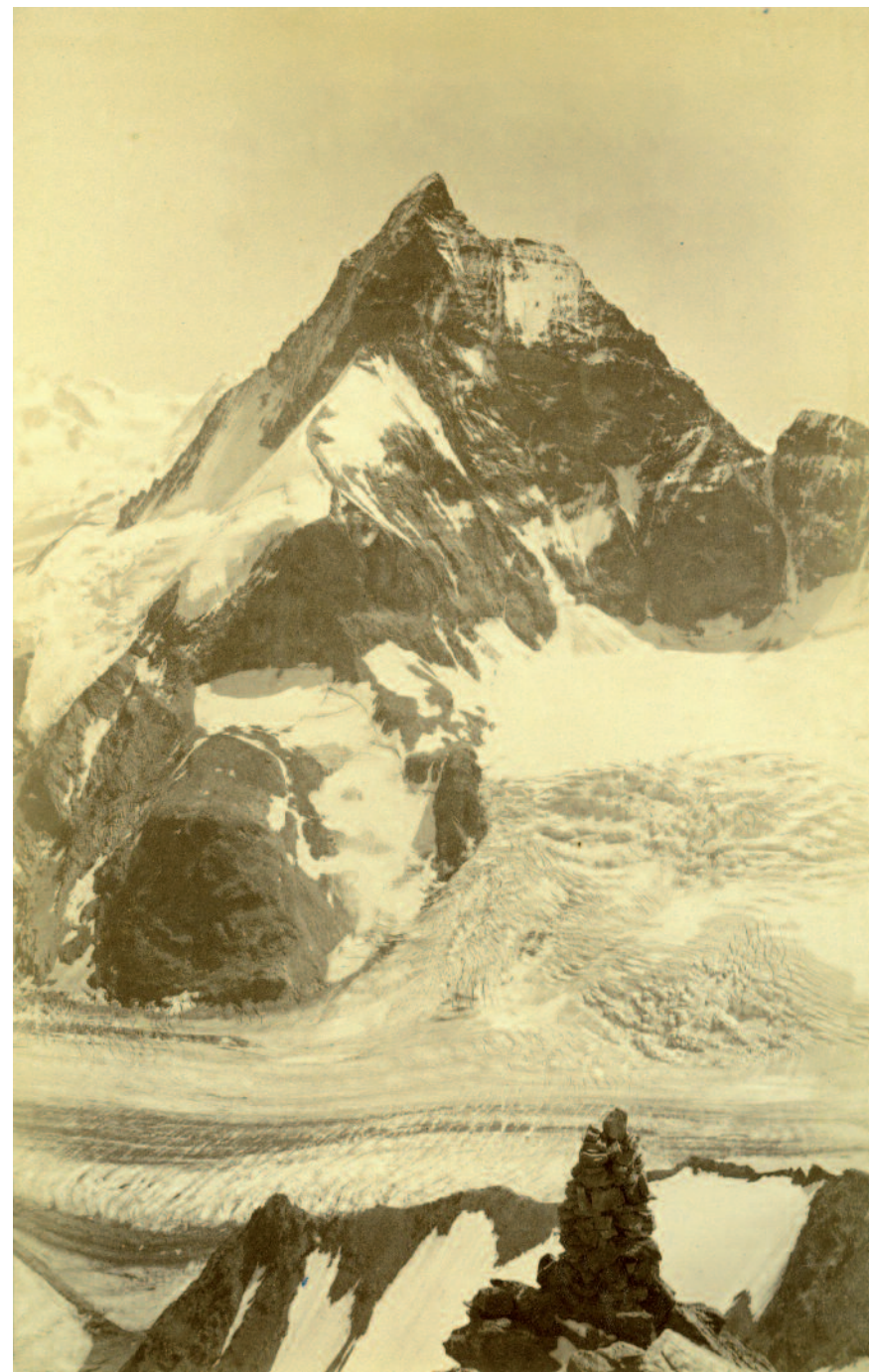
watercolour

22½ x 30¼in (57 x 77cm)

signed

Kessler was a specialist watercolourist of mountain scenery and worked throughout the Tyrol. Although his pictures seem deceptively simple and softly executed, the wide expanses of snow in large sheets such as this view of St. Christoph am Arlberg, are formed of many subtle washes, graded to convey the distribution of light on the blanketing snow. Kessler favoured clear, cold days and his skies are often dappled with yellow ochre clouds. Like the finest painters in watercolour, Kessler knew every time went to stop adding detail.

The Hospiz am Arlberg is situated at 1,800 metres and dates to the end of the 14th century when it was founded to provide shelter for travellers by monks who took the name of the patron saint of wanderers, St. Christopher. Today, it is run as a secluded but exclusive hotel.



Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913)

The West Face of the Matterhorn seen from the Tête Blanche, Zermatt, Switzerland

albumen print

7 x 4¾in. (18 x 12cm)

circa 1881

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JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

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