

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Wilhelm Friedrich Burger (1882 - 1964)

The Dent Blanche as seen from Riffelsee, Zermatt, Switzerland

oil on canvas 23½ x 31½in (60 x 80cm) signed Peaks & Glaciers 2019, p. 16

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.