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EST. 1817

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Charles Marie Dulac (Paris 1865 – 1898
Paris)

*View of La Presqu'île de Portofino from Monte Allegro
sur les hauteurs de Rapallo*

Inscribed, dated and signed (lower right): 'Rapallo
95/M/Ch Dulac †'

Oil on paper laid down on board

9 ¼ x 13 ¾ in. (23.5 x 35 cm.)



Dulac painted these little landscapes of the Italian coast in Rapallo, near Portofino in 1895. He had been a Symbolist print maker before over-exposure to the harmful properties in the lead white pigment he used caused him to develop a terminal illness and drove him mad. The last few years of his life were spent creating visionary landscapes such as these. They possess the feverish intensity of a man who is aware of his imminent death. He became obsessed with Saint Francis of Assisi and developed a pantheistic view of the world in which the glory of nature is the very embodiment of God. During this period he began adding a cross to his name when signing his paintings. He died aged 33 in 1898 and was buried in a Franciscan monk's habit.

In 1894, just four years before his death, and one year before he painted the present landscapes, Dulac created an album of nine colour lithographs based on St. Francis of Assisi's poem, *The Canticle of Creatures*. These images explore the relationship between art and spirituality, and Dulac's intent as an artist was to invite the viewer, through his art, to a place of contemplating the mystery of creation and to focus on what is being evoked within. It is also surely no coincidence that these oils were painted in Rapallo, a municipality in the province of Genoa in Liguria, northern Italy and where Friedrich Nietzsche, whilst walking on two roads surrounding Rapallo, first formulated the ideas for his philosophical novel, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Composed in four parts between 1883 and 1885 and published between 1883 and 1891, the book deals with ideas such as "the eternal recurrence of the same", the parable on the "death of God", and the prophecy of the *Übermensch* (loosely translated as "Superman" or "Overman"). Given Dulac's state of mind when he painted these landscapes, it seems highly likely that he must have been aware of Nietzsche's work and specifically section 125, which depicts the parable of the madman who is searching

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for God. He accuses us all of being the murderers of God. "'Where is God?' he cried; 'I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers...". It is by Zarathustra's transfiguration that he embraces eternity, that he at last ascertains "the supreme will to power". This inspiration finds its expression with Zarathustra's

roundelay:

O man, take care!

What does the deep midnight declare?

"I was asleep—

From a deep dream I woke and swear:—

The world is deep,

Deeper than day had been aware.

Deep is its woe—

Joy—deeper yet than agony:

Woe implores: Go!

But all joy wants eternity—

Wants deep, wants deep eternity." [Walter Kaufmann translation]