



RA GALLERY

Mikhail Kazansky

(1932 - 2003)

Evening at the Oil refinery 1958

signed with initials lower right. further signed, titled and dated 1958 on the reverse
oil on canvas
50 x 78 cm

Price on request

Provenance:
Private collection, UK



Evening at the Oil Refinery belongs to the series 'Caspian oil fields' and is painted by Mikhail Kazansky, who was following the realistic school of painting in his early years and filled his works with rich, expressive colour. The painting was created in 1958, when Kazansky was still studying at the I. Repin St. Petersburg's State Academic Institute and was trying to determine his own style and creative path. An interest to the urban landscape, the production process and a person's identity within it - these topics are reflected in the arts of the artistic culture of Moscow at that time, the period of the Khrushchev Thaw (1953-1964) and can be found in the works of the majority of Soviet artists in the 1950s and 1960s. Factory workers, engineers, miners have become permanent components of the urban landscape. The era of construction of Soviet society was the reason why this tendency has maintained such a strong position in the art of that time. In addition to the

representation of all kinds of manufactories, hydroelectric power stations, energy-producing stations, construction sites, mines and other industrial facilities, the theme of the oil industry and the marine landscape with silhouettes of oil rigs as the subject-matter has acquired particular recognition. At that time, new oilfields were put into operation, especially in the Caspian Sea, and oil production was actively increasing, expanding the country's economic potential and being another reason for the nationalistic pride. The industry of the Soviet Union began to play an important role not only in the socio-political sphere but also in the art of that time.

Kazansky deliberately chooses the topic of the richest depot of 'black gold' for his series of paintings.

The region itself has a thriving history dating back to ancient times. Throughout the ancient world and the middle ages, the Caspian region had a key trade and military-strategic importance, whereas starting from the XVII century industrial development of the Caspian basin and the presence of various natural resources took the leading role. This region has legendary importance for the history of oil production as it is in the Caspian Sea that for the first time in the world people began to extract oil offshore. It has been known for long that there is the natural release of oil out of fissures in the seabed coming to the surface in the area of Oil Rocks. However, the arrival of oilmen in the field of the sea only began with the strengthening of Russian influence within the region. Back in 1701, Peter the Great issued a Decree on the establishment of the Caspian flotilla. Information that was obtained from special expeditions, such as descriptions of mud volcanoes and oil deposits, irrevocably attracted Peter the Great to the basin of the Caspian Sea. The oil-rich Baku region was the main goal of Peter's campaign to the Caspian provinces in July 1722. His enterprise was actively continued by Empress Catherine II, who was intensifying Russian presence in the area. At the end of the XIX century, the growth rates of the Caspian oil industry of the Russian Empire were absolutely incredible and could not surprise the international community more. At the beginning of the XX century, the idea of oil extraction from the depths of the Caspian Sea was widely developed as at the end of the XIX century oil was extracted only from shallow areas with the help of rig camps. Although the Soviet Union has always attached great importance to the entire basin of the Caspian Sea and conducted extensive physical and geographical studies, the region still has a lot of unrealised potentials and is now considered very promising by continuing to have plenty of new oil fields. The Caspian Sea has always been and remains to this day an important crossroads of interests of many countries and peoples and still occupies a prominent position in the foreign policy of the neighbouring states. *Evening at the Oil Refinery*, the painting created in the middle of the XX century, on the one hand, demonstrates the industrial presence of modern man, but, at the same time, has a strong connection, a thread through the centuries, which ties in this painting and this subject-matter with the eternal struggle of mankind for survival and the search for power, domination over territories, prosperity of empires and civilisations.

