

MAXIM BURNETT



INDUSTRY INCARNATE TRIPTYCH



PHOTOGRAPHY BY REECE GIBBINS

STATEMENT

Maxim Burnett is a self-taught British figurative oil painter based in London, who recently recovered from cancer. Between immunocompromising illness and lockdowns, Burnett has trained his artistic talent throughout his 20s in rural isolation, giving his work an outsider quality that's uniquely his own. Burnett finds inspiration in muralists such as Rivera, symbolists like Blake, constructivism, futurism, brutalism and purism.

Burnett considers his painting practice an “act of enshrinement”. Be this his expressive and textured handling of paint, the scale and proportions of his canvases, his choice of materials or the making and gilding of his own frames, Burnett's works are venerative labours; allegorical monuments to contemporary themes.

Though his style is reminiscent of a mid-century aesthetic, Burnett's paintings echo many whilst taking on a distinctly individual revisionist language. His painting calls the confidence of humanist ideals into question to challenge the prosperity and optimism of the 20th century. He examines our Faustian relationship with power and the deific agency of humanity's influence in our current time, to memorialise our precarious, perilous moment in history.

QUOTE

“I intend for my paintings to serve as vessels, within which to enshrine and eulogise a sense of the 21st century. Technological advances have facilitated humanity's ubiquitous dominion. Yet, we are manufacturing our own demise; the seas boil and the land burns. My recent body of allegorical paintings attempt to incarnate the hyper-industrial forces of the 21st century as literal ‘titans of industry’.

Working large scale in oils, drawing from both contemporary and historic sources, my practice is driven by a desire to immortalize this perilous moment in history, providing future viewers with visual eulogies that pictorially elegise and lament current times. A period that I suspect will not last long. I hope people may reflect on and understand the sublimity of the world we are shaping, and evoke a sense of awe, pathos and empathy.

BIOGRAPHY

Maxim Burnett (b. UK) is a self-taught artist who recently completed an MA in Fine Art at City & Guilds, London. His works have been exhibited as part of Aubergine Art Gallery's Young Contemporaries (2019), BWG Gallery's group exhibition Apocalyptic Changes of State (2024), Independent Curator Juliet Wilson's group exhibition Cheers to the Echo, and Cynthia Corbett Gallery's Young Master's Art Prize exhibition (2025). He was shortlisted for the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy and Victoria Gallery open call (2022). He has been published in MU Magazine (2022), and his works belong in The Moore Collection and The Hempleman-Adams Collection.



BWG GALLERY
PRESENTS
INDUSTRY INCARNATE
Plunging deep, last words to meep
The abyssal dark of every corner
That shies and still their angel pin
Burn the sky, but the wrath
And drive our might's engine, death
To churn and gnaw through water and pine
Following him, if I ever dare
And in the darkness for one who
That not and do as I may
Odeon the world has the rest
If you could know we are wrong
That kind and clean and pure and true
And while we sleep for transportation
Gather, while we sleep, the world
The land of which we are made
And when they come, we are made
To see the world as it really is
To see the world as it really is
BY ARTIST PLAZMABURST



Maxim Burnett's triptych *Industry Incarnate* comprises the monumental 261 x 157cm paintings *Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic*, *Soil & Spade*, and *The Last Breath*. Each work strives to enshrine and eulogise industrial subjects of the 21st century. Visual allegory and sheer scale are used to memorialise and lament the contemporary condition. Taking both thematic and stylistic inspiration from mid-century movements such as the Russian Constructivists and Romanticism, Burnett's triptych reflects on their perception of an industrial, secular future as a utopic opportunity, considering where this Faustian ideology has taken our species and the wider natural world. Burnett chose to gilt frame the triptych – a skill he acquired whilst being unable to paint due to temporary nerve damage caused by cancer - to align with the practice's tradition which is often associated with religious icons, religious imagery, and paintings of cultural status. The deification of each painting's subject stands as a testament to the existential magnitude and sublimity of modern society.



BURNETT'S POEM WHICH FOUNDED THE TRIPTYCH

Industry Incarnate's 3 Panels Represent the Poem's 2nd, 3rd & 4th Stanzas

Plunging deep, dark pools to reap,
The abyssal dew of briney tombs,
That slick and spill their ancient goo.

Burn the sky, boil the ocean,
And drive our mighty engines motion,
To churn and grind through smoke and grime.

Fell the tree, til' forest clear,
And in the paddocks the cow we'll rear,
That eat and die and multiply.

Dredge the sea and haul the net,
Til' even ocean floors are swept,
That knot and strain and catch and wrap.

And while we keep the storm from mind,
Below, within, great tempests brew,
The likes of which we never knew,
And when they come, as ceaseless tides,
To wash away our hungry hives,
I, for one, will be glad.

Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

271 x 167cm | Water Gilded Frame

Unframed | £10000.00 (Exc. VAT)

Framed | £11500.00 (Exc. VAT)

2024



Soil & Spade

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

271 x 167cm | Water Gilded Frame

Unframed | £10000.00 (Exc. VAT)

Framed | £11500.00 (Exc. VAT)

2024



The Last Breath

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

271 x 167cm | Water Gilded Frame

Unframed | £10000.00 (Exc. VAT)

Framed | £11500.00 (Exc. VAT)

2024



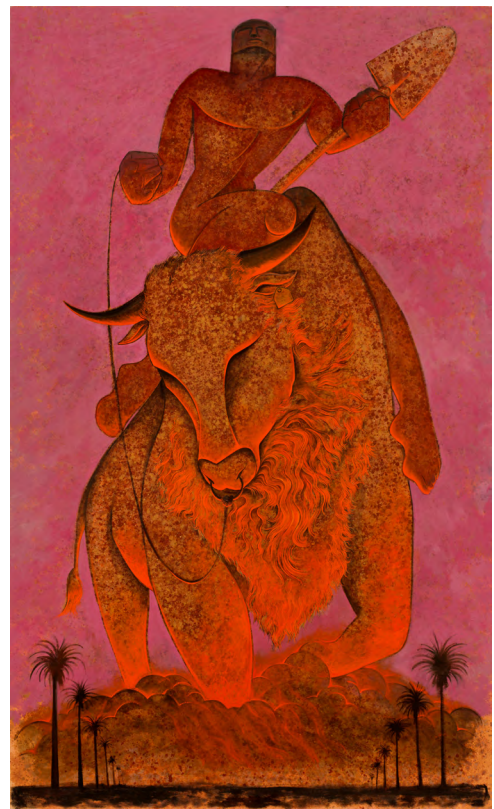
INDUSTRY INCARNATE PRINT EDITIONS

FULL TRIPTYCH
£750.00



Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic

Edition of 25 | Signed & Numbered
Hahnemühle German Etching Paper
70 x 42cm
£300.00 (Inc. VAT)



Soil & Spade

Edition of 25 | Signed & Numbered
Hahnemühle German Etching Paper
70 x 42cm
£300.00 (Inc. VAT)



The Last Breath

Edition of 25 | Signed & Numbered
Hahnemühle German Etching Paper
70 x 42cm
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Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

2024

Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic is the literal title for a metaphorical image depicting the power and complex relationships inherent in humanity's industrial era. In depicting the rig as a colossal, almost divine figure, I aim to personify the immense and ubiquitous impact of human agency in the 21st century world. This is the logic behind the depictions across all three paintings.

The blazing central figure cradles a burning coal, symbolizing both power, ambition, progress and knowledge, as well as destruction, pollution, and cataclysm. With downcast eyes reflecting sombre introspection, the figure kneels amidst a tumultuous scene: skies blackened, oceans boiling, and her towering form besieged by wind. The figure holds the flame with a nurturing, motherly disposition, yet solemn, symbolic of humanities affection for its Faustian power and reflective of the human condition.

Through *Oil Rig Aflame in the North Atlantic*, I seek to create a visual eulogy, suffused with reverence, sublimity, and, importantly, pathos. This painting is a testament to the precarious juncture in history that we currently occupy - a moment fraught with peril, destined for an uncertain fate. For me, an oil rig aflame, and what that represents, is emblematic of these ideas. I invite viewers to contemplate the duality of progress and to reflect upon the legacy we are shaping.

Soil & Spade

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

2024

Soil & Spade depicts a towering rider astride an enormous bull. The rider has the demeanour of a tyrant, gazing above and beyond the viewer, across his dominion, holding a spade the way a king would grasp his sceptre. The bull strides across a burning landscape, the scorched land and palm oil boulevards beneath its hooves stretch on into the horizon, silhouetted against an unnatural pink sky. But the bull is a subject - nose ring and leashed, a tag through its ear. Its gaze is downcast, defeated. The monumentality of the depiction befits the monumentality of its themes; the scale of contemporary agricultural industry.

The Last Breath

Oil on Cotton Duck

261 x 157cm

2024

The Last Breath depicts a colossal steely blue figure hauling a vast net from a broiling ocean. Despite the lashing rain and raging torrents of water, the fisherman stands unrelenting, unyielding, in defiance to the elements, with heavy fists and cold demeanour. The net strains under the weight of a dense catch of shimmering fish, who writhe in a mass, with expressions of shock and horror. An eminent glow rises from the water, as the ocean bounty wrenched to the surface is heaved upwards towards the shadowy fisherman and his leviathan-esque ship, that peers over the waves and down at its catch, lit with a ghostly bioluminescent cyan. The fisherman has icy, slit, inhuman eyes; his near emotionless expression communicating his indifference to the act, almost like an automaton in his hulking pursuit. This evocative exploitation of nature by human nature is a further microcosm, depicting present aquaculture and our perceived dominance over natural order.

PAINTING

My paintings are extremely intensive to create. I utilise a huge variety of painterly techniques, ranging from experimental and aggressive brushwork to fine detailing, as well as many materials, mediums and hand-milled pigments. For the triptych *Industrial Incarnate*, my most ambitious project to date, the following text outlines the materials and technical applications that enabled the creation of this artwork:

To achieve the monumental and immersive quality intended for these paintings, I chose huge canvases as the foundation, allowing the scale to convey the grandeur and potency inherent in the subject matter. The 12oz cotton duck canvas was selected for its robustness and slightly coarse texture. This texture interacts with the layers of paint, making it easier to achieve some of the crucial effects intended, enabling the overall depth and complexity of the surface image.

In creating these pieces, I employed a variety of material mediums, including ground lead crystal, beeswax, and various oils, alongside numerous milled pigments, and hand-made paints, to achieve such a high level of chroma and texture. These materials were carefully chosen not only for their aesthetic, artistic properties but also for their archival integrity - they do not compromise the chemical/physical stability of the artwork, ensuring that the work will endure over time. The combination of these elements allowed me to create aesthetics that are both visually stimulating and durable. They possess a richness of texture and colour and the reactions with light create a visual brilliance befitting the subject matter. My use of mediums was inspired by Anselm Kiefer, Picasso, and Rembrandt, all of whom employ dry mediums through their paints.

Milling my own paints is an essential practice in the creation of rich, quality, high chroma colourants. Artists such as Kehinde Wiley and Aundrey Remnev inspired me to push the chroma of my paintings to their limit, encouraging me to mill my own paints from pigment and utilise a range of oil mediums. This is also the stage where I add the ground crystal, further elevating the chroma. When light enters a painting containing glass, rather than simply bouncing back, it is refracted. This refraction sends light outward into the painting before it bounces out, creating an internal glow. This greatly enhances in person viewings of the work as different perspectives allow different interplays of high chroma, light and refraction.

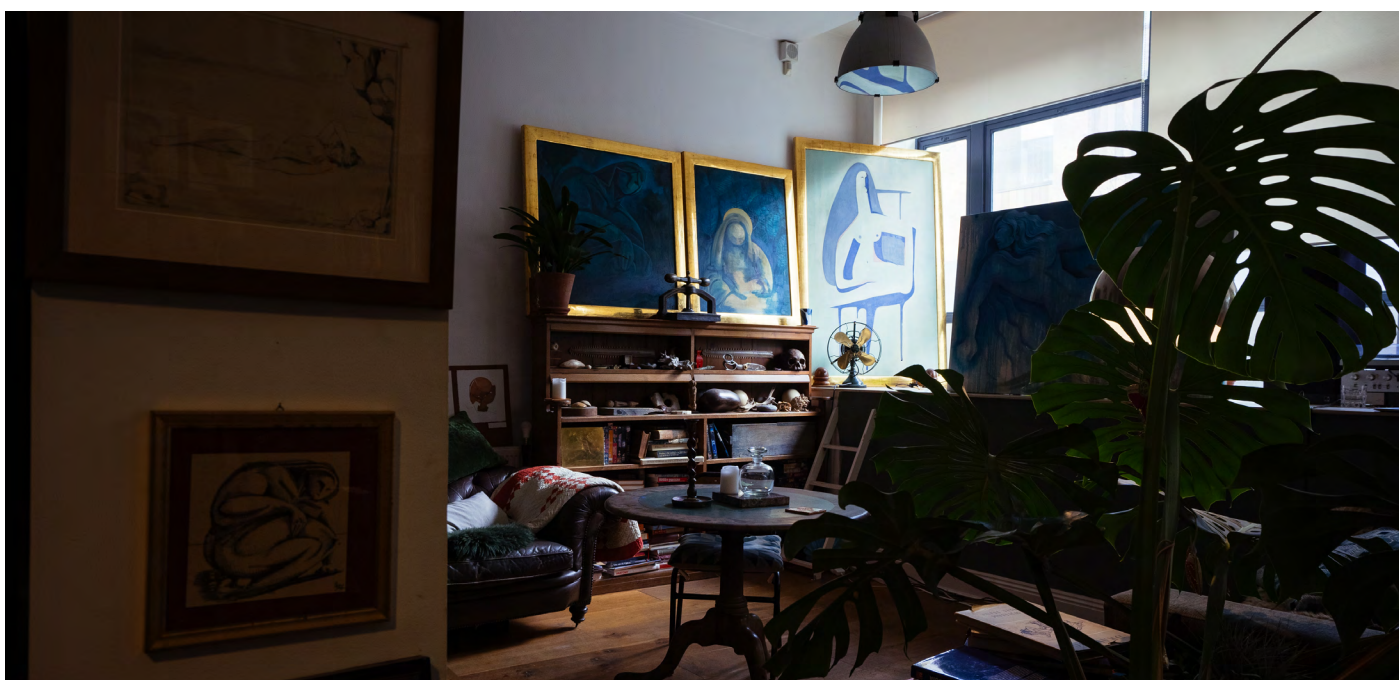
To achieve the diverse range of marks and textures in the painting I used an array of brushes. These included traditional artist brushes, calligraphy brushes, unconventional tools like sign-writer brushes, and brushes I made myself. Each tool contributed to the unique textural network of strokes, affording me a rich variety of mark-making to enhance the work's overall dynamism. Many stages of the painting involve long and difficult processes to construct their transparency, texture and chroma; using many techniques and flicking approaches, pipettes, and even sieves to achieve the desired overall patination.

I also hand constructed and water gilded the frames to complement and enhance the painting's colour palette; particularly the rich oranges, deep blues, and the pink sky. The gilded frame not only amplifies these colours but also serves as a nod to the tradition of framing significant works of art in such a manner. My hope being to create other art historical connotations within the piece. The association of gilt frames and the material connotations of gold with religious works and divinity further contributes to the apotheosis of the industrial elements depicted, elevating the profane to the status of the divine.

Ultimately all materials and tools used in the creation of this painting were carefully selected to serve both the visual and conceptual artistic vision, and the practical need for durability.



DETAIL & PROGRESS SHOTS



IN THE STUDIO



MAXIM BURNETT

INDUSTRY INCARNATE



Enquiries & appointments contact BWG Gallery Director Jack Trodd

jack@brusheswithgreatness.co.uk

+44 (0) 7789 172 073

@brushes_with_greatness

www.brusheswithgreatness.co.uk