

## The Carters

This husband-and-wife team delights in manipulating light, color and form



### **PAINTERS** The most innovative

art can come from the most venerable of techniques. In the case of British husband-and-wife team Rob and Nick Carter, it started with a photographic method first developed in 1834.

The Carters did not begin as boundary breakers, artistic or otherwise. Rob, 39, trained as an advertising photographer; Nick, 38, studied painting and fine arts. They met in school when they were both 16, married a decade later and might have expected a traditional life in traditional fields. But then they started fooling around with light and color.

They began their collaborations modestly: Rob would take photographs and pass them on to Nick, who painted on them. The two liked what they got and soon were working together on what they called light paintings—and what 19th century photographers



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called photograms—images produced by exposing photographic paper directly to light without a camera getting into the game at all.

It's safe to say the early photo pioneers could not have envisioned what the Carters—with their 21st century lights—came up with: bold and colorful designs, 3-D waves, geometric patterns, images evoking ethereal sunrises or the northern lights.

From there, Rob and Nick explored even further. They built interactive light sculptures from neon. They produced a series of photographs in which Rob used a revolving camera to capture impressions of light and color from landscapes around the world. They painted tiny oil abstracts, photographed them and blew them up to 50 times the size of the originals before destroying the paintings. It was the photos that would be the art, after all. The paintings? Merely a means to it. "All the work is about light, color and form," says Rob.

In their 10 years together, Rob and Nick have not entirely left their mainstream roots; they have become favorites of the advertising world—with commissions from Absolut Vodka and Land Rover—and the celeb set, selling their work to Elton John, David Beckham and other boldface names. The pair's next project: portraits—shot with an 886-lens camera of their own design. In this partnership, the future is light. —BY ALEX PERRY