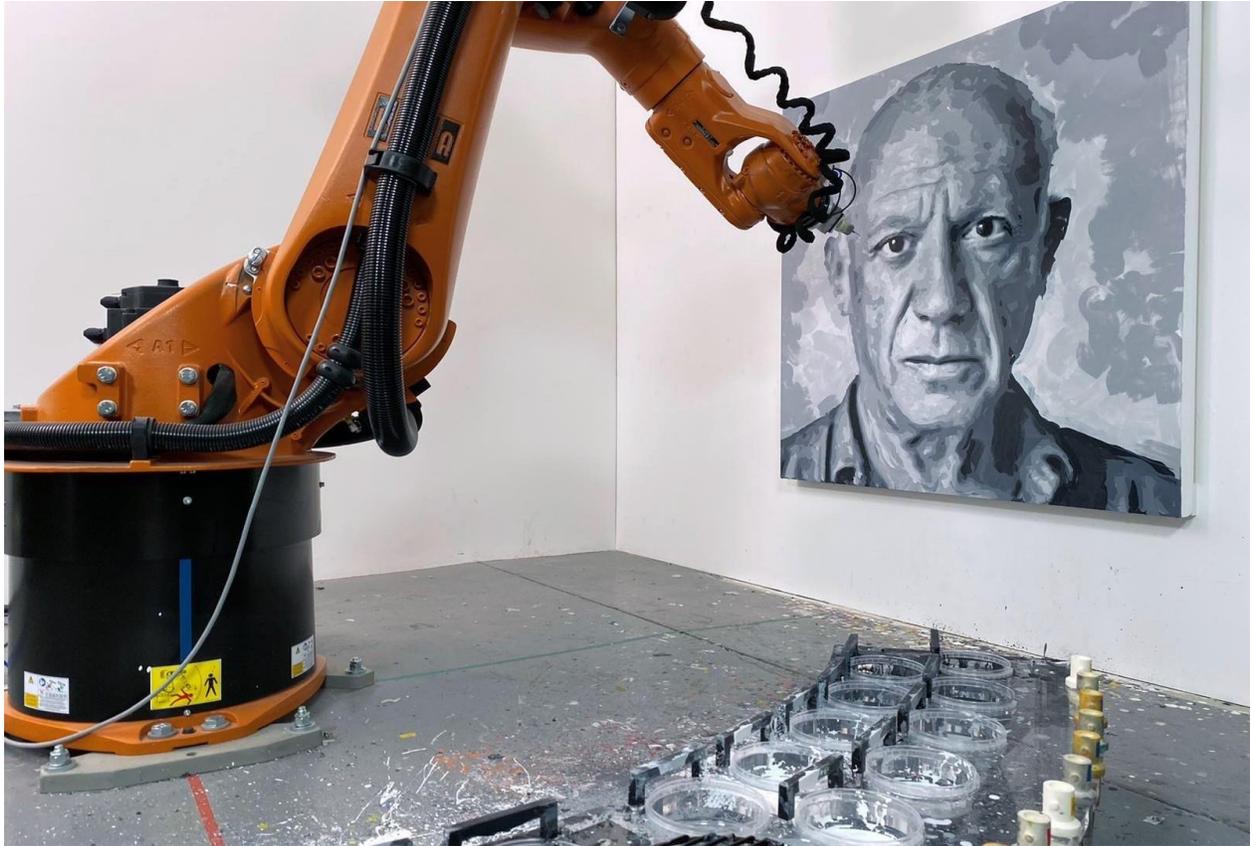


# BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Rob and Nick Carter, *Pablo Picasso Robot Painting*, Painting time: 31:15:03 Stroke count: 9,646, 14–18 December 2019, Acrylic on wooden board, 122 × 122 cm. (48 × 48 in.)

## ROB AND NICK CARTER DARK FACTORY PORTRAITS

12 February – 24 July 2020

Ben Brown Fine Arts is delighted to present *Dark Factory Portraits*, our first exhibition with Rob and Nick Carter at the London gallery, and one of the artists' most technically pioneering projects to date.

The Carters are known for their creative and playful engagement with digital age technologies. Their new series of paintings has its genesis in a series of reports on the future of the workforce. According to a 2013 study by researchers at Oxford University and consulting firm Deloitte, 35% of UK jobs are liable to be fully automated by the mid-2030s. The future for artists is relatively secure according to projections, because the more a job relies on a combination of empathy, creative thinking, social intelligence and advanced levels of manual dexterity, the safer it is from the reach of the machine.

Nevertheless, the question intrigued Rob and Nick Carter. Could a machine become a painter, for example? And more than that, could it convey not just form, but that most intangible of human qualities: personality?

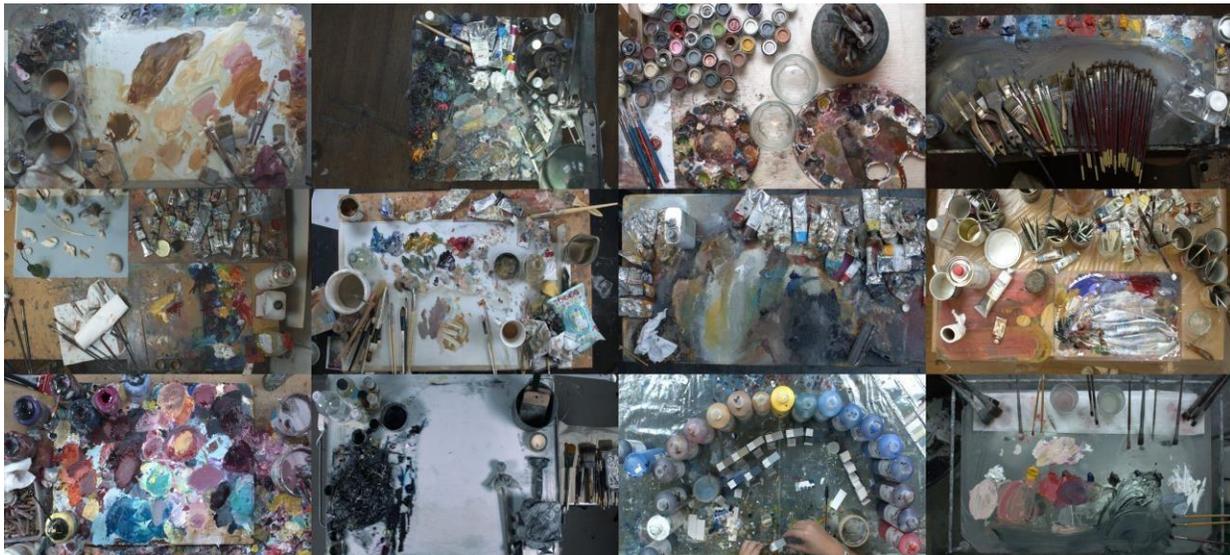
As far back as the invention of the power loom in the late 1700s, there have been periodical panics about automation making workers redundant. And reports of the death of painting by the likes of French 19<sup>th</sup> century painter Paul Delaroche on first seeing a daguerreotype, have shown themselves to be greatly exaggerated. In practice, mechanisation and innovation have widened the creative field, with new technologies carving out a place alongside existing ones and presenting new opportunities rather than threats to art and culture.

Recent experiments with AI artists in the conception of original works of art have shown that technology is still far from entering artistic discourse on an equal footing with human artists. The Carters focused their enquiries on execution: presented with a pre-existing photograph, how accomplished a painted portrait can current technology be pushed to achieve?

Working with a team of cutting-edge software programmers and visual effects specialists, they set out to explore how far and how fast algorithms and moving parts could progress towards a new creative paradigm. Central to this conversation was the artists' desire to use technology to execute their own ideas, and paint in a style of their choice. Over months of iterations, they worked with the programmers to layer the code so that the robot could paint both loosely and to a very high level of detail where necessary, executing the portraits to a consistent style envisioned by the artists. The outcome of three years of advanced research is set to unsettle, provoke and inspire.

Taking their title from 'lights-out manufacturing', where factories can function in the dark because robotic systems do not need to 'see' what they're doing, the *Dark Factory Portraits* will be on display for the first time at Ben Brown Fine Arts, where visitors will be able to watch industrial robot manufacturer KUKA's famous robotic arm in action, painting a new generation of portraits entirely unmediated by the human mind and eye.

The resulting portraits of celebrated artists such as Frida Kahlo, Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono and Damien Hirst are set to be not only revolutionary works of art, but among the first cultural artefacts of a dawning age.



Rob and Nick Carter, *Painters Palette*, 2018-19, 5 hour 20 minute 12-channel looped video installation, edition of 3 + 2 AP, 169.2 x 388.4 cm. (66 5/8 x 152 7/8 in.)

Caroline Walker  
Katherine Tulloh  
Susie Hamilton

Jonathan Yeo  
Flora Yukhnovich  
Will Ayres

Geraldine Swayne  
Jake Wood Evans  
Ben Johnson

Hugo Wilson  
Neil Gall  
Charming Baker

The technical ingenuity of the robot arm and underlying algorithm is complemented by *Painters Palette*, a new video work recording 12 artists' work-stations over several hours of a studio day. Filmed directly from above and with only the artists' working hands captured in the shot, it traces the highly physical, intuitive and distinctive cadences of artistic thought in action, as they dab, mix and coax the pigments to their will. The painters work in a variety of media, ranging from oil to acrylic, watercolour and enamel, and were drawn widely from Rob and Nick Carter's circle of friends, including Jonathan Yeo and rising stars Flora Yukhnovich and Caroline Walker. As a counterpoint to the *Dark Factory Portraits*, *Painters Palette* is a joyful and compelling celebration of the dexterity of the human hand and the virtuosity of the brain.

### **About the artists**

Rob and Nick Carter are a husband and wife artistic duo who have been collaborating for over 20 years. Their work is housed in the collection of the Maurithuis, The Hague; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Sir Elton John Collection; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; Fondation Custodia, Paris and the Frick Pittsburgh. They are the first living artists to have had their work exhibited at The Frick Collection, New York.

### **FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION AND ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:**

Charlotte Tchaikovsky  
Ben Brown Fine Arts  
T. +44 (0)20 7734 8888  
E. [charlottet@benbrownfinearts.com](mailto:charlottet@benbrownfinearts.com)  
[www.benbrownfinearts.com](http://www.benbrownfinearts.com)

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