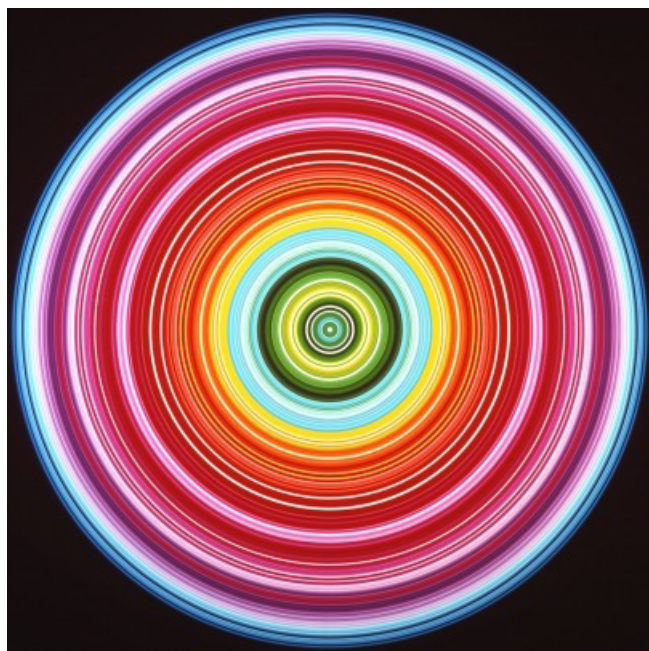


## Lords of Light

by Robin Peckham

Revolve  
The Cat Street Gallery  
222 Hollywood Road, Hong Kong, China  
June 15, 2010 - July 31, 2010

Hong Kong is an interesting city in which to play with light, essentially constructed out of varying glass and steel rectangles perched between verdant hills and the reflective harbor. Many an installation has productively toyed with the glimmers that manage to break through the rows of skyscrapers and into the gallery cubes below, most recently perhaps Masato Kobayashi and Au Hoi Lam. Most significant of all, however, is the Chinese painter Yan Lei, who spend several years in Hong Kong in the 1990s. During that period, he developed his "Color Wheel" series, which satirically deconstructed the notion of painting in parallel with paint-by-number images. Influenced by the pervasive neon signs that dominate the streetscapes of Mongkok and Wanchai, these wheels have always felt somehow more alive than his later detached irony.



Rob and Nick Carter have struck upon a similar method of composition in their latest works, currently exhibited at the Cat Street Gallery. Most impressive is the series "Spectrum Circles" (2010), which exist gracefully in the ever-diminishing territory between photography and the painterly. Produced through a unique process in which light is directly applied to photosensitive paper, the final images are irreproducible and absolutely mesmerizing, consisting of a series of glowing concentric rings that could just as easily be computer-generated paintings or photographs of neon lights. This is the ultimate distillation of photography, incorporating a technique that captures the evanescent while maintaining its uniqueness to a single specific point in space and time.

Besides the obvious precedent in the artists associated with the light and space movement, from Robert Irwin and James Turrell to Larry Bell and DeWain Valentine, these images recall nothing so much as the work of the late painter Kenneth Noland. In a moment of appropriate symmetry, Noland's formalist oeuvre is marked by two similar bodies of work related to what some see as his trademark bullseye pattern, one positioned in his last decade and one during the decade that launched his career. The Carters demonstrate a high degree of sympathy for this legacy, reflecting this same sensitivity to the play of natural light while channeling it through a primal interpretation of the lens- and screen-based realities that mark art production today.

[artslant.com](http://artslant.com), 2010