

HdM GALLERY

SONG LING | NEGATIVE

ACADEMIC ADVISER: LU MINGJUN

2026.05.22 - 2026.07.04



The Poetics of Folds No. 4, 56 × 40 cm, 2026



The Anatomy of Life No. 6, 86 × 55 cm, 2025



Sunrise over the Surging Ocean, 170 × 92 cm × 2, 2026

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

HdM Gallery is pleased to announce Negative, a solo exhibition by artist Song Ling, opening at the gallery's Beijing space during Beijing Gallery Weekend on May 22, 2026. The exhibition will feature more than forty new works from several recent series, alongside the artist's seminal early-1990s work Meaningless Choice? No. 59. The exhibition will remain on view through July 4, 2026.

From Mechanical Reproduction to the Development of Memory

Song Ling's recent practice draws its visual impetus from Song dynasty painting and sculptural traditions. Maintaining a commitment to the language of traditional ink painting, the artist employs highly accomplished washes and mogu ("boneless") techniques to construct estranged, inverted visual fields reminiscent of photographic negatives. Song Ling's engagement with the "negative image" can be traced back to the Meaningless Choice? series created more than forty years ago. In those works, the artist adopted a mode of "mechanical reproduction," presenting positive and negative renderings of animals in doubled parallel arrangements. Through repetition, the paintings generated an overwhelming visual totality charged with psychological pressure.

The three new series presented in this exhibition — The Anatomy of Life, Unraveling the Nature, The Poetics of Folds further develop this investigation. When encountered individually, these seemingly autonomous yet subtly interconnected "negative" works resemble photographic negatives objectively archived by the artist. Since the invention of photography, the negative has functioned simultaneously as a device for recording, infinite reproduction, specimen-making, and the preservation of history; it also serves as a material trace of elapsed time. The photographic negative exists simultaneously as a concealed form of reality and as a regulated mirror image conditioned by the mechanisms of representation.

By employing this black-and-white inversion as a visual "negative," Song Ling reactivates and "develops" cultural memory and imagery associated with the Song dynasty. Through the metaphor of photographic development, these historical references are drawn into the context of the age of industrial reproduction, producing a dislocated and uncanny sensation in which ancient memories lie dormant within the present before resurfacing anew.

Reverse Muscle Memory — The Superimposition of Ink Painting and Exposure

For many years, Song Ling has remained committed to working with the traditional medium of ink. In the artist's view, however, ink is merely a tool — neither inherently



Song Ling

“traditional” nor “contemporary.” Rather, the material properties of ink continue to retain unexplored possibilities within the present moment.

Although the generative logic underlying traditional ink painting stands in complete opposition to that of the photographic negative, Song Ling’s recent works radically disrupt this inherited “muscle memory” by simulating the inversion process of photographic development. Through a process of “overlaying black upon white,” the artist subjects an inherently spontaneous and expressive handmade medium to an extraordinarily rational and precise system of control. Through successive layers of washes and tonal accumulations, the works produce a black-and-white inverted effect in which the visual logic of ink painting converges with the “exposure logic” of the photographic negative.

This disjunction between medium and visual effect constitutes more than a technical transformation; it compels viewers to adopt the “negative thinking” required to read a photographic negative, thereby re-recognizing images that might otherwise appear familiar.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Song Ling was born in Hangzhou in 1961. He graduated in 1984 from the Department of Chinese Painting at Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art), after which he joined the Zhejiang Painting Academy as a professional painter. In 1985, he organized and participated in the ’85 New Space exhibition, and the following year became involved in the artist collective Pond Society (Chi She). In 1988, Song Ling relocated to Melbourne, Australia, where he presented seventeen solo exhibitions over the course of his career. Since returning to China in 2014, the artist has held retrospective exhibitions at Today Art Museum, Zhejiang Art Museum, and HOW Art Museum. He currently lives and works between Hangzhou and Melbourne.

Song Ling’s major bodies of work include the People · Pipeline and Meaningless Choice series. In recent years, his practice has approached classical Chinese painting through an almost subtractive methodology: gradually stripping away the lyricism, expressive vitality, and spiritual resonance embedded within the original works, and transforming them into restrained, simplified planes and structures. Through this process, the artist generates estranged images marked by a sense of de-emotionalization and the erasure of traces of life.

His works have been collected by numerous public institutions and museums, including the Pacific Asia Museum in the United States, National Gallery Singapore, White Rabbit Gallery, Yuz Foundation, Long Museum, TANK Shanghai, HOW Art Museum, START Museum, the Artbank Sydney collection in Australia, ANZ Bank Australia, Deakin University, and the Hawkesbury Regional Art Collection in Australia.



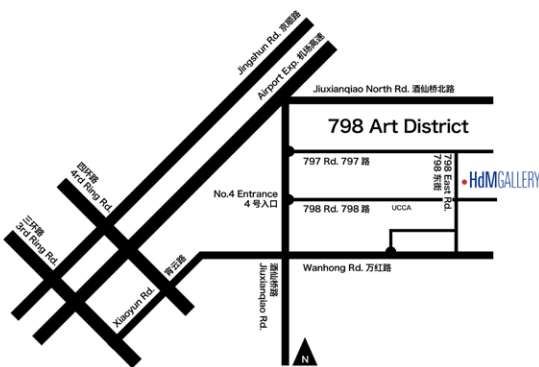
Beijing space



Beijing space



Founders



Gallery Contact

+86 10 56877540

press@hdmgallery.com

798 Art District, No.2 Jiuxianqiao Road

Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

Duration: 22 May 2026 - 4 July 2026

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday from 11am to 6pm

(Or by appointment)

www.hdmgallery.com

HdM GALLERY

Created in 2009 by Hadrien de Montferrand with the support of Laurent Dassault and Olivier Hervet, HdM Gallery specializes in all disciplines of contemporary art – painting, sculpture, video and installation - with a particular focus on Chinese artists. Based in Beijing, it opened a project space in Paris in 2021.

The gallery is dedicated to supporting recognized artists from different horizons; most of its Chinese artists are in the early stage of their career and the gallery promotes their work abroad. International artists on the other hand are more established and the gallery mainly attempts to raise awareness of their work in China.

Besides its normal exhibition program, HdM Gallery participates in art fairs in China and abroad including Art Basel Hong Kong, Art021 Shanghai, Art Brussels and Art Geneva, produces academic catalogues, and organizes institutional shows for its artists.

FOUNDERS

Hadrien de Montferrand has long served as a bridge between the Art worlds of China and Europe. His more than seven years at various auction houses and Art institutions included roles as marketing director for ARTCURIAL, the largest French auction house, and for the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing.

Laurent Dassault , an entrepreneur to the core, helped to found Arquana, continental Europe's leading horse auction house, in 2006. His entrepreneurial spirit extends to his charitable activities as well: Laurent serves as the administrator of the "Friends of Pompidou Museum's Association" in Paris, and heads the development committee for the auction house ARTCURIAL.

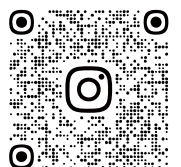
Olivier Hervet graduated with an MA in Classics from Oxford University in 2008. After working for Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery since its inception in 2009 where he developed the gallery's network of young collectors, he became a partner in 2012 with the goal of opening a second space in China.



WeChat



rednote



instagram