

Tang Maohong: Simplified

Opening Reception : 16 May 2026, 4pm
Exhibition Period : 16 May 2026 – 28 June 2026

Singapore, May 2026 — ShanghART Singapore is delighted to present *Simplified*, a solo exhibition by the Chinese artist Tang Maohong, opening on 16 May 2026 at 4pm. This exhibition brings together a selection of the artist's latest paintings, developed extensively over the past year following his relocation to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It also marks his return to Singapore after his 2019 solo exhibition, and twenty years since his participation in the first Singapore Biennale.

Tang's new body of work reflects a significant development in his practice, centered around explorations into the process of painting, and its relationship with the result. The act of painting typically results in two outcomes - the image on the canvas and the mixed colours on the palette. The works stem from the approach of mixing colours directly on the painting surface instead of using a palette. This simple gesture collapses two planes into one, creating a mutually-influencing relationship within the same pictorial space.

Originating from a period of constraint, this approach has been refined over the past year into a more distilled visual language. Tang pares down his compositions to focus on the relationship between the intended image and the residual colour. Deceptively simple, the underlying tension is withheld from the apparent harmonious coexistence of the two elements, experienced only upon prolonged inspection.

Tang's practice has consistently engaged with the nature of images and how we perceive them. He initially opted to work with animation for its ability to explore the instability of images through time. Forms derived from the real world would morph, dissolve, and reassemble, remaining familiar yet resistant to fixed interpretations. Over time, this temporal process became increasingly condensed, leading him back to painting. What once unfolded sequentially is now internalised, with shifts and transformations embedded within a single, suspended surface.

Operating between abstraction and figuration across different mediums, Tang's works often resist immediate recognition. His forms appear familiar yet elusive, inviting sustained attention rather than instant interpretation. At the core of his practice is an ongoing inquiry into perception – how images are formed, how meaning emerges, and how both remain inherently unstable.

Across two decades, Tang has continued to refine and distill his approach, pursuing the same fundamental questions with increasing precision. This presentation marks a pivotal moment in that trajectory. The new paintings bring together image, material, and structure into a tightly resolved yet open-ended condition, where process and result are held in balance. For Tang, painting is not a means of searching for fixed answers, but a reciprocal process in which meaning emerges from the act of painting itself.

“At the end of 2020, I returned from Seoul to Guilin. Due to the pandemic, I was quarantined in a hotel in Shenzhen for two weeks, during which I made some small acrylic paintings on paper. Working under limited conditions, I mixed paints directly on the surface of the work, using it as a palette. As a result, two things remained on the surface: the image I intended to paint, and the colours that would otherwise have stayed on the palette. Every colour thus appeared in duplicates.

This led me to consider reversing the process. If colours are mixed to create a painting, then painting itself can also become a way of mixing colours. In that sense, it becomes natural for the colour patches to remain on the surface and take part in the composition—the painting becomes a palette, where one paints on the palette itself. In the process of painting, the painted image and the color patches shape and complete each other, mutually causal, each with its own integrity.

This is not a new technique, but a way of presenting new relationships on the painted surface: the painted image and the paint that produces it together form a complete composition. These reflect my thoughts on “what to paint” and “how to paint”.

Why do I paint in this way? Because it makes me feel grounded.

What is painting? It is not about solving problems, but about holding myself accountable to time.”

About the Artist

Tang Maohong (b.1975, Lingchuan, Guangxi; lives and works in Kuala Lumpur) explores the nature of images and perception across animation and painting. His simultaneously references and subtly unsettles art history and popular culture, integrating diverse visual elements that blur the boundaries between fine art and the everyday. His early animations feature morphing, unstable forms, while his recent paintings condense these transformations into single, suspended surfaces. Absurd, humorous, and quietly confrontational, his works reflect an image-saturated psyche while continually loosening the relationship between representation, material, and visual experience.

He has exhibited across the U.S.A., South Korea, Singapore, India, Germany, Italy, China and has participated in the 7th Shanghai Biennale (2009), the Asian Art Biennial (2007), as well as the inaugural Singapore Biennale (2006).

About ShanghART

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, working with over 50 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, LI Shan, LIN Aojie, Arin RUNGJANG, SUN Xun, Melati SURYODARMO, TANG Da Wu, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, ZENG Fanzhi, and ZHAO Renhui Robert.

ShanghART Singapore was established in 2012 as the gallery's Southeast Asia wing, located in the contemporary art cluster Gillman Barracks. The gallery's first overseas space serves as a platform to introduce Chinese contemporary art to the region while developing collaborations with Southeast Asian artists, facilitating cross-cultural dialogues and enriching artistic exchanges within the global art community.

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