

DAWN'S BELLS AND DUSK'S DRUMS

03.04.2026 – 30.06.2026

Galleria Continua is pleased to present Dawn's Bells and Dusk's Drums, a solo exhibition by Chinese artist Ni Youyu, opening on 3 April 2026 at its Beijing space. This marks the artist's first collaboration with the gallery and his first solo exhibition in Beijing. Structured around the notion of time, the exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of Ni Youyu's practice over more than a decade, tracing a continuous line of inquiry across different periods and media. Building on key projects previously presented in major museum contexts, the exhibition not only assembles key bodies of work, but also a number of recent creations, many of which are shown here for the first time, forming a milestone presentation within the artist's career.

Ni's practice operates between conceptual thinking and meticulous craftsmanship. Drawing from both Eastern and Western art histories as well as diverse cultural contexts, he integrates the temporal traces embedded in antique materials with contemporary modes of reflection, developing a distinct artistic language through a repetitive and focused process. The exhibition title, Dawn's Bells and Dusk's Drums, derives from the cyclical rituals of Zen Buddhist practice, marking the passage from morning to evening while evoking a continuous mode of return. In Ni's work, time is not only accumulated through practice, but embedded within materials, images, and methods as a central concern – through historical traces, the juxtaposition of elements from different periods, and the slow process of making, together forming an internal structure of time within his works.

On the ground floor, the main hall presents a constellation of the artist's key series in a display reminiscent of a European museum, where paintings, sculptures, and installations are dispersed throughout the space, inviting a fluid mode of viewing. At its centre is The Painting Exhibition in the Woods V, a newly commissioned 7.2-metre-wide work and

the largest to date within Ni's Golden Water Washing painting series. Expanding upon his signature technique, the work incorporates collage and mixed media, intensifying the interplay between controlled intervention and natural process. Nearby, The Disappearing Waterfall II occupies the main wall, reducing the landscape to a fundamental tension between water and stone. Each work in this series registers the traces of repeated flows and resistances—what appears as image is in fact the sedimentation of time, a “frozen waterfall.” Also presented for the first time is the long-conceived Dynamic Balance series, developed over fourteen years. The installation Sound of the Void, suspended from the height of the main hall, introduces a vertical, ritual-like presence that resonates with the cyclical temporality evoked by the exhibition theme.

Within the main hall, two purpose-built rooms focus on smaller-scale paintings. In these works, recurring motifs such as curtains and doors articulate a threshold between concealment and revelation. Antique frames act as “vessels of time” that in turn shape the image, while the artist's distinctive diptych compositions create tensions through fragmentation and recombination. Together, these elements extend Ni's ongoing investigation into illusion and reality, balancing precise control with conceptual ingenuity. Tucked discreetly into a corner, two newly developed works—embedded at a 90-degree angle—offer a subtle yet precise intervention, rewarding close attention.

The adjacent corridor on the ground floor is dedicated to Freewheeling Trip, a series initiated in 2011. Using found vintage photographs sourced globally, Ni cuts, collages, and reconfigures fragments into new visual structures. Images from different times and places are recomposed into a coherent yet fictional world, prompting a reconsideration of photography and its relationship to memory, landscape, and representation.

as an independent artist since 2007.

The second floor shifts towards an immersive, cosmological dimension. One side space presents *Galaxy*, a key project begun in 2008, in which coins—objects charged with political and economic value—are transformed into painterly units through hammering and reworking. Through this process, value undergoes a continuous transformation—from presence to absence, and back again—culminating in vast star-like constellations composed through Ni's accumulated labour. The work on view is the fifth and possibly final large-scale iteration of the series, following four earlier versions now held in major collections, including those of Uli Sigg, M+ Museum in Hong Kong, the Brooklyn Museum in New York, and He Art Museum in Foshan. Another side space features a light-based *Dynamic Balance* installation related to the Solar System, in which spheres such as footballs, basketballs, tennis balls, and even mirrored disco balls stand in for the sun and its planets—extending the artist's exploration of balance, cosmic order, and the latent potential of found objects.

The third floor is entirely devoted to the *Arch* series, one of Ni's most recognisable bodies of work. Since 2011, the artist has transformed antique pinball machines into hybrid structures that combine elements of painting, sculpture, and installation. As a cross-cultural architectural archetype, the arch resonates with the gallery's pitched roof while also evoking a broader relationship between the human body and the cosmos, acquiring a heightened, almost ritual dimension within the exhibition. The presentation both opens and concludes with an *Arch* work, forming a cyclical structure that reinforces the exhibition's underlying meditation on time.

Dawn's Bells and Dusk's Drums is not only a systematic reflection on Ni Youyu's artistic trajectory over the past decade, but also a meditation on time, perception, and the conditions of making. Through the repetition of daily practice and the accumulation of material and thought, time is embedded, condensed, and made visible. In this process, the exhibition also reveals an artist who, within an increasingly noisy and accelerated art world, continues to pursue a restrained yet unwavering path—one defined by persistence, clarity, and a deeply personal rhythm of creation.

About the artist:

Ni Youyu, born in 1984, is an artist based in Shanghai and the recipient of the CCAA Best Young Artist Award in 2014. Since 2005, Ni has been involved in curating contemporary art exhibitions and writing critical essays on individual artists in Shanghai. He has worked

Ni has been invited to present solo exhibitions at numerous major museums and galleries, including Shanghai Art Museum (2012), Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (2015), Kunstverein Konstanz (2017), Orange County Museum of Art (2018), Yuz Museum (2019), He Art Museum (2022), and Powerlong Museum (2024). His works are held in the collections of many internationally renowned institutions, including the Brooklyn Museum (New York, USA), Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), M+, Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hongkong, China), Yuz Museum (Shanghai, China), He Art Museum (Shunde, China), White Rabbit Gallery (Sydney, Australia), Arario Museum (Seoul/Jeju, South Korea), me Collectors Room Berlin (Berlin, Germany), By Art Matters Art (Hangzhou, China), Powerlong Museum (Shanghai, China), Architect Model Museum (Shanghai/Guangzhou, China), Shanghai Library East (Shanghai, China), the Sigg Collection (Switzerland), the Pinault Collection (Paris, France), DSL Collection (Paris, France), Ghisla Art Collection Foundation (Locarno, Switzerland), and Shanghai Center of Photography (Shanghai, China).

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Paris and Dubai. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire for continuity between times and a desire to write a current history. Thanks to its investment in forgotten and unconventional sites, the gallery has always chosen atypical locations, developing a strong identity and an original positioning in over thirty years of activity. In 2004, Galleria Continua has been one of the first foreign art galleries to reach China, opening the second gallery space in Beijing's 798 Art District. Since then, Galleria Continua has endorsed an important role of cultural mediator on that side of the world, offering Chinese art-lovers a chance to enjoy exhibitions created specifically for this space by internationally acclaimed artists.

Galleria Continua / Beijing

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For further information about the exhibition and photographic material:

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