



## Liu Sheng: Potato Man's Quest

Curator: Li Yao | 15 June to 31 August 2024

Artist Talk: 15 June 2024, Saturday, 3:00 – 4:00 pm (conducted in Mandarin)

Liu Sheng in conversation with his university professor - artist Xu Tan, artist Duan Jianyu, observer and researcher of Liu Sheng - Liang Jianhua, and exhibition curator Li Yao, delving into Liu Sheng's recent practice and the ecology of art in the Pearl River Delta.

Opening Reception: 15 June 2024, Saturday, 4:00 – 6:30 pm  
Venue: gdm, 108 Ruttonjee Centre, 11 Duddell St, Central, Hong Kong



**Liu Sheng** grew up in a rural farming village in Suixi County in Zhanjiang, an area stricken by poverty located in the southwest of Guangdong province in China. Liu studied oil painting at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts where he received a bachelor's degree in 1994. He currently lives in Beipo Village of Suixi County.

Born in 1971, Liu Sheng experienced China's industrial revolution and the drastic social transformations of rapid urbanization. As the first university graduate and breadwinner of the family, Liu took on jobs in design and manufacturing to lift his family out of poverty for 20 years. This survival experience of marginalized people hustling in changing cities, made Liu very different from artists that start practicing professionally straight out of art school.

A migrant worker was Liu Sheng's identity for two decades, but he never stopped questioning the boundary of art and society. In 2014, he no longer wanted to be a mere observer and started documenting his daily encounters. With the sensibility of a poet, and in the format of photographic documentation, watercolor sketches and prose, Liu transforms his social engagements into a visual diary. The art of Liu Sheng is familiar and straightforward.

From 2014 to 2019, Liu Sheng delved into the social landscape of 'urban villages' in the Pearl River Delta. These urban villages play a pivotal role as catalysts in the process of mega-urbanization by providing the most essential factors for development: land, housing and production space for masses of migrants. The side effects of Chinese-style modernization on the social and psychological behaviors of individuals are discerned in Liu's pictorial stories. Fragments of social reality are captured in Liu's vivid characters such as "Fei Lo" and "Bro Hua". Through depicting the state of existence of these migrants, the artist attempts to document how China's economic revolution transformed the country's domestic sphere.

Long-duration social practice is not only a way for Liu Sheng to transcend his own observation and perception, to generate artistic expression in the joint relationship with others, but to expose critical issues within existing systems and catalyze social exchange.

Late 2019, Liu Sheng returned to his home village and rented two acres of farmland from his cousin which began his life as a 'Potato Man'. Farming is the artist's way to reconnect with his hometown. Through manual labor, Liu integrated into the community to grasp the complexities in Chinese village life today, where family-run farmland is challenged with deficient productivity. Liu explores the intimate choices of village families in the face of larger forces of modernization, showing how these negotiations shape the configurations of daily village life — from power structure, communal superstitions, individualism vs collectivism, to resources distribution and inequalities.

Entering the fifth year of his "Return to Sweet Potato Farming" project, Liu Sheng unveils the social realities he discovered as a potato farmer through a new series of evocative oil on canvas works. Exhibition **"Liu Sheng: Potato Man's Quest"** is curated by Li Yao, presented by gdm (Galerie du Monde) in Hong Kong from 15 June to 31 August 2024.

Image: Liu Sheng "A Cat's Claw Farmer" (2024) Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm



## Curatorial Statement

### Liu Sheng: A Potato Man's Quest

Text By Li Yao

In an era marked by revolutions in artificial intelligence and other technologies, artist Liu Sheng chose to return to his hometown at the end of 2019—Beipo Village, Suixi County, Zhanjiang, Western Guangdong—to launch a community-participatory project titled “Returning to Sweet Potato Farming.” This project continues his engagement with the agricultural migration issues he encountered in the urban villages of the Pearl River Delta. This time, however, his role shifted from an urban observer (“Shui Liu Chai”) to a new “farmer” returning to the land under the guise of art. If it weren't for the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown policies at the beginning of 2020, which provided a pretext for his return to farming, internal family pressures and rural societal skepticism might have halted the project.

This solo exhibition at gdm Hong Kong, titled “Potato Man's Quest,” showcases works created by Liu Sheng since his return in 2019. The pieces revolve around Liu's rural life network and his field labor records. In these works, Liu Sheng transforms into a villager, blending in with farmers who make a living from the land. He experiences and witnesses the realities of contemporary rural life and production, collecting and refining these ordinary people's robust vitality, stubborn traditions, and distinct local imprints amidst the harsh conditions. He brings the nuanced and brutal life politics of the Western Guangdong rural background into a visual theater imbued with absurdity and irony.

For Liu Sheng, returning to rural life remains filled with uncertainties. His participatory intervention as a returnee cannot alter the logic of the countryside; instead, the environment constantly changes him: “Living here, becoming part of it, transforming from an ‘outsider’ to an ‘insider,’ I realized that only power can change the reality here. I began to study the power structures within the village while my body reacted strongly to the labor and the environment, which is why recent paintings incorporate these physical sensations.”

Since the “Returning to Sweet Potato Farming” project began in 2019, Liu Sheng's life and creative practice in the countryside has continued despite the challenges. The three-year land lease signed at the time has long ended, and the harvest of that year's sweet potatoes has entered the cycle of material reincarnation. Yet, Liu Sheng's resilience shines through. Therefore, we titled this exhibition “Potato Man's Quest,” presenting works born from this context, providing an artistic mirror and echo for the absurd times experienced over the past few years.



Liu Sheng “Sweet Potato Man” (2022)  
Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm



## Liu Sheng 劉聲



1971, born in Beipo Village, Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province, China  
1994, graduated with a BFA in Oil Painting from Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts  
1994-2014, a migrant worker traversing cities across China  
2014-2019, practice socially engaged art across urban villages in the Pearl River Delta  
2019-present, artist and a potato farmer in rural village

### Solo Exhibitions

“Potato Man's Quest 返歸種番薯”, gdm, Hong Kong (2024)  
“Water Flows, Ripe Fields 豐水澤田”, 1978 Art Village, Guangzhou (2021)  
“Shui Liu Chai 水流柴”, Bonacon Gallery, Guangzhou (2019)  
“Silent Chant 無聲的號子” (duo solo exhibition), Bonacon Gallery, Guangzhou (2017)

### Museum Exhibitions and Biennales

“Party of Face 俾面派對”, Times Museum, Guangzhou (2024)  
“One song is very much like another, and the boat is always from afar. 離岸之歌”, Times Museum, Guangzhou (2021)  
“About the Pandemic 關於疫情”, OCAT Shenzhen (2020)  
“Pearl River Night Cruise 珠江夜遊”, Guangdong Art Museum (2019)  
“Nonglin Open Stage 農林共舞台”, Guangzhou FEI Arts Museum (2019)  
“Clipping Rats 夾老鼠”, Hong Kong Shenzhen Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture (2019)  
“Duck Rice 鴨飯”, Hong Kong Shenzhen Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture (2017)

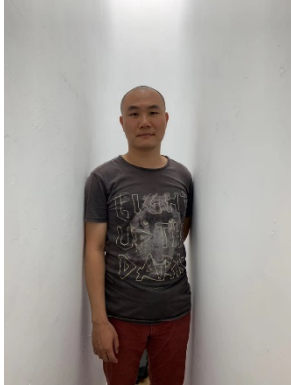
### Social Practice – Projects

HB Station 黃邊站 (2023-2024 collaborator)  
Return to Sweet Potato Farming 返歸種番薯 (2019-ongoing)  
Village Rain 村雨 (2017)  
Xi-San Film Studio 西三電影製片廠 (2017)  
Residents 居民 (2016-2017)



gdm

## About the Curator Li Yao 李耀



Li Yao is an art critic, curator and institutional arts practitioner.

Li Yao has spearheaded and curated over a hundred exhibitions, art salons and forums, including: “Time Capsule 時光機”, “Why Shut Down HB Station? 為何關閉黃邊站?”, “Casting Stones to Search for Directions 投石問路”, “ART Park 藝術公園”, “The Making of an Institution: Ecology of Guangzhou Contemporary Art – HB Time 機構生產：廣州青年當代藝術生態考察之黃邊時間”, “Live On 繼續生活”, “Shine Like Diamonds 像鑽石一樣閃耀”, “Chirp: Art Camp – 2019 Shenzhen (Pingshan) Public Art Festival 啁啾：藝術紮營——2019 深圳（坪山）公共藝術季”, “Thousands of Light 萬家燈火”, “Episode and Reflection: A Solo Exhibition of Li Mingchang 章回：李明昌香港個展”, “The 9<sup>th</sup> Shenzhen Young Artists Week – Contemporary Art Invitation Exhibition ‘Phoenix Rising from the Ashes’ 第九屆深圳青年藝術周當代藝術邀請展——否極泰來”, “Utopia and Contemporary Art’s Participation 烏托邦與當代藝術的參與性”, “Aohu Art Forum: Shenzhen’s Era of Arts from Dafen Village, Biennales to Art Fairs 黿湖藝術微論壇：從大芬村、雙年展到博覽會時代的深圳藝術發生學”, “Contemporary Symptoms and Legal Implementation 當代症候與法律實踐”.

## About the Gallery – gdm 燦樂

gdm is a Hong Kong-based art gallery founded by Fred Scholle in 1974. Originally opened as Galerie du Monde, gdm represents more than twenty artists, nurturing a diverse roster of artists at all stages of their creative practices with a global perspective. The gallery has been acclaimed for its ground-breaking work in championing artists of postwar and contemporary movements such as Hong Kong’s Circle Art Group, and Taiwan’s Fifth Moon.

gdm Projects launched in 2008 which transformed the gallery with a new emphasis on contemporary art and dedication to supporting emerging and underrepresented diaspora artists engaging with cultural identity and conceptual practices. Fostering collaborations with curators and institutions worldwide — gdm operates a dynamic program that encourages imagination and risk-taking, driven to provide opportunities for artists to amplify their voices within their communities, and across platforms in the international contemporary art world.

Email: [enquiry@galieriedumonde.com](mailto:enquiry@galieriedumonde.com)

Website: [www.galieriedumonde.com](http://www.galieriedumonde.com)

Instagram: [@galieriedumonde](https://www.instagram.com/galieriedumonde)

gdm opens from Monday to Saturday, 10:00 am to 7:00 pm



## 劉聲個展《返歸種番薯》

策展：李耀 | 2024年6月15日至8月31日

開幕對談：2024年6月15日（星期六）下午3:00至4:00

對談嘉賓：劉聲、徐坦、段建宇、梁健華、李耀 / 語言：普通話

聚焦劉聲近五年的創作歷程，並以劉聲為個案的創作與珠三角藝術生態網路的關係進行討論，試圖通過對話呈現一位活躍在生活現場與富於行動想像力的藝術家的工作邏輯與生成路徑。

開幕酒會：2024年6月15日（星期六）下午4:00至6:30

地址：香港中環都爹利街11號律敦治中心一樓 gdm 燦樂



劉聲於1971年出生於中國廣東湛江遂溪縣北坡村，1994年畢業於廣州美術學院油畫系，現居北坡村。劉聲的成長見證了中國的工業革命與急速城市化為社會帶來的巨大變革。由於受當時的社會經濟改革及生存環境影響，劉聲從美院畢業後便放棄畫筆，開啟了二十年的打工創業生涯，在全國多地打拼謀生。這段在日新月異的城市中，作為邊緣群體掙扎求生的經歷，使得劉聲的藝術張力和坦率別樹一幟。他善於在特質鮮明的時代背景中，透過有血有肉的平凡人物，來表達草根階層堅韌的生命力。

2014年劉聲重新邁出藝術實踐的腳步後，便不再滿足於作為一名旁觀者，而是不斷地質疑和探索藝術與社會的邊界，開始通過創作來記錄他身邊平凡人的生活現狀。為了還原珠三角城中村居民的遭遇，劉聲逐步進入現場，把工作室從佛山南海大沙村搬到金沙灣，再搬到廣州番禺西三村，始終處於城市的邊緣。他拿著手機，每天在村裡繞上幾個來回，拍下觸動他的片段。一頭紮進小人物的故事裡，劉聲再難把目光從他們的身上移開。劉聲認為，這些小人物才是中國的大部分，他們背後的問題複雜又普遍：「城市的衝撞讓處於邊緣的村落被夾在中間，我們只能跑步前進。人們生活在一層層的網中，因此很多人不願表達，他們真正的生活沒被看見。有時代共性，有大把機會，也有對改變命運的期待。」

2019年11月，劉聲搬回湛江遂溪，從堂兄那裡租了兩畝田地，開始了他的番薯佬生活，啟動《返歸種番薯》社會實踐項目。現今踏入他回歸農村的第五個年頭，劉聲表示：「我生活在這裡，置身其中，從「陌生人」變成「熟人」，發現只有權力才能改變這裡的現實。我開始研究村裡的權力結構，同時身體對勞作和環境產生強烈反應，因此近期繪畫裡帶入了身體感受。」

劉聲擅於透過觀察與體驗，將一般人習以為常的日常拆解重組，透過創作重構成另一維度的現實。從劉聲的作品可以發現他對自身的審視，同時從更深一層會看到劉聲對人類生存問題的思考。我們處於一個劇變的時代，但對於藝術的態度劉聲一直都沒有變，即，純粹和沉浸。

gdm 燦樂畫廊（曾用名：Galerie du Monde 世界畫廊）欣然於香港空間呈現劉聲個展《返歸種番薯》，展覽由李耀策展，展期為2024年6月15日至8月31日。6月15日開幕的下午三時，gdm將舉辦一場對談，特別邀請了劉聲在廣州美術學院的老師藝術家徐坦、藝術家段建宇、劉聲近年藝術實踐的觀察者與研究者梁健華參與。除了聚焦劉聲最近五年的創作歷程，將以劉聲為個案的創作與珠三角藝術生態網路的關係進行討論，試圖通過對話呈現一位活躍在生活現場與創作一線，富於在場感知和行動想像力的藝術家的工作邏輯與生成路徑。本次對談將由展覽策展人李耀主持。

圖片：劉聲《番薯佬》布面油畫，50 x 40 cm（2022）

策展人語

劉聲：返歸種番薯

文 / 李耀

在人工智慧等技術革命不斷湧現的世代，藝術家劉聲於 2019 年底選擇回到家鄉——粵西湛江遂溪縣北坡村，啟動了社區參與式的《返歸種番薯》項目，以延續他對珠三角城中村農業移民問題的關注和表達。然而，這次他既無士大夫歸隱田園的詩意和浪漫，而是從現代城市邊緣的觀察者（《水流柴》），嘗試轉變為返鄉種地的新「農民」。若不是 2020 年初爆發的新冠疫情及封控政策，為其回歸農耕提供了藉口，源於家庭內部和鄉土社會的阻力與質疑或許早已使項目變形難產。

本次 gdm 燦樂畫廊的劉聲個展《返歸種番薯》展出的作品，均是藝術家自 2019 年返鄉之後的創作。作品的主題圍繞劉聲在農村的生活網路與勞作記錄展開。劉聲運用簡單直接的大地色系，刻畫了番薯田等場景裡的人物，膚色是經年累月烈日炙烤的焦黑，眼睛和牙齒充滿血絲或飛白，田野上沾滿泥汗的勞作人的驚心動魄在劉聲的筆下得以顯現。在這裡，劉聲既化身為村民，融入向土地討生活的人群，一邊體驗和見證當下農村生活與生產的現實肌理，也在日曬雨淋的粗糙環境中採集、提煉著平凡人的強悍生命力、頑固的民間傳統與地方烙印。他將粵西農村背景下的世相幽微和殘酷政治，轉譯成兼具荒誕魔幻和戲謔色彩的圖像劇場。

對於劉聲而言，重歸鄉土的生活依舊充滿不確定性，返鄉主體的介入無法改變鄉村的邏輯，反而是環境在不斷改變他自己：「我生活在這裡，置身其中，從「陌生人」變成「熟人」，發現只有權力才能改變這裡的現實。我開始研究村裡的權力結構，同時身體對勞作和環境產生強烈反應，因此近期繪畫裡帶入了身體感受。」

自 2019 年啟動《返歸種番薯》項目至今，雖然劉聲當時簽下的三年土地租約早已結束而未續約，番薯地裡的收成也已進入能量循環，但劉聲在農村的生活和創作卻仍在進行中。因此，我們以“返歸種番薯”為題，集合了這一情境下的作品一併呈現，也為過去幾年所經歷的魔幻時光補充一段來自田野的藝術鏡像與回聲。



劉聲《紅牛》  
布面油畫  
150 x 200 cm (2024)



gdm

## 劉聲



1971 年生於廣東湛江遂溪縣北坡村  
1994 年畢業於廣州美術學院油畫系  
1994 至 2014 年以工人的身份於中國多個城市打拼  
2014 至 2019 年正式開啟社會實踐藝術創作，在珠江三角的城中村生活、觀察、體驗  
2019 年至今回到老家北坡村成為耕地的番薯佬，繼續進行社會藝術實踐

## 個展

《返歸種番薯》香港 gdm 燦樂畫廊 (2024)  
《豐水澤田》廣州 1978 文化創意園 (2021)  
《水流柴》廣州本來畫廊 (2019)  
《無聲的號子》(雙個展)，廣州本來畫廊 (2017)

## 機構展覽及雙年展

《俾面派對》廣州時代美術館 (2024)  
《離岸之歌》廣州時代美術館 (2021)  
《關於疫情》深圳 OCT 當代藝術中心 (2020)  
《珠江夜遊》廣東美術館 (2019)  
《農林共舞台》廣州扉美美術館 (2019)  
《夾老鼠》港深城市\建築雙城雙年展 (2019)  
《鴨飯》港深城市\建築雙城雙年展 (2017)

## 社會實踐藝術創作項目

黃邊站合作者 (2023 - 2024)  
返歸種番薯 (2019 - 至今持續創作)  
村雨 (2017)  
西三電影製片廠 (2017)  
居民 (2016 - 2017)



## 關於策展人李耀



李耀為藝評人、策展人與藝術機構實踐者。

李耀曾策劃與主持過的展覽項目有：《時光機》、《為何關閉黃邊站？》、《投石問路》、《藝術公園》、《機構生產：廣州青年當代藝術生態考察之黃邊時間》、《繼續生活》、《像鑽石一樣閃耀》、《啁啾：藝術紮營——2019 深圳（坪山）公共藝術季》、《萬家燈火》、《章回：李明昌香港個展》、《第九屆深圳青年藝術周當代藝術邀請展‘否極泰來’》和《烏托邦與當代藝術的參與性》、《鼈湖藝術微論壇：從大芬村、雙年展到博覽會時代的深圳藝術發生學》及《當代症候與法律實踐》等過百場展覽、藝術沙龍與論壇活動。

## 關於畫廊 gdm 燦樂

燦樂畫廊（gdm）於 1974 年由 Fred Scholle 在香港創辦，遂以世界畫廊（Galerie du Monde）開始舉辦展覽至今。畫廊致力培育及支持藝術家的長期藝術實踐，目前代理了二十多位藝術家。gdm 以其開創性的戰後華人藝術項目而受到國際讚譽，其中包括香港“中元畫會”，台灣“五月畫會”等。

2008 年，gdm 邁進新的里程碑，以當代藝術為重心，致力支持新銳、中生代和亞裔離散藝術家的藝術實踐。推進與策展人和全球機構的合作，為藝術家提供更多元的實驗平台和展覽機會，讓藝術家在本地社區以及國際當代藝術界的舞台上保持活躍，並以最大限度展現他們的理念，發揮當代藝術作為社會參與性論述的潛能。

電郵：[enquiry@galersedumonde.com](mailto:enquiry@galersedumonde.com)

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Instagram / 微信公眾號：[@galersedumonde](https://www.instagram.com/galersedumonde)

gdm 燦樂的開放時間為星期一至六早上十時至晚上七時