

Fool's Paradise
Curator: Leo Li Ch
策展人：陳立

老劉一枕夢黃梁

Liu Yefu: Fool's Paradise

Curator: Leo Li Chen

Time: 2022/6/10-7/23

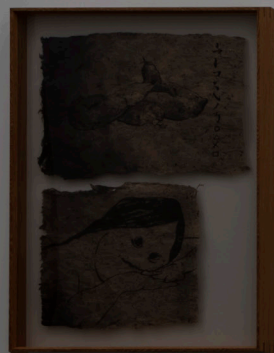
'The antiquated makes an attempt to re-establish and maintain itself within the newly achieved form.' Artist Liu Yefu's recent works expand from such a core idea. Liu visited the border region of Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia many times and filmed the life of his protagonist, Liu Huiqing. Despite his dire circumstances, the old man Liu Huiqing continued to practice traditional painting, calligraphy and writing about local vernacular culture. What his preservation of traditional Chinese society and culture represents is particularly contradictory to the current trend of seeking novelty with new benefits. In Liu Yefu's video work, *Fool's Paradise*, Liu Huiqing's old-fashioned way and Elon Musk's space exploration become two sides of the same coin that are the essentially the same: whether it is global, scientific, evolutionary and radical, or local, secular, ancient and conservative, how do we define 'new'? In his works, Liu Yefu probes the imagined interior and exterior with a highly charged visual language and insists on responding to the division of the contemporary world below secular life in this land. In this solo exhibition, Liu Yefu will present an eponymous video and a series of pottery and ink drawings.

About the Artist

Liu Yefu (b. 1986, Beijing) focuses on video and mixed material creations. Influenced by Chinese folk culture, Liu is interested in the expression of black humor with a stream of consciousness style, playfully comments on the chaos and restlessness of social realities. By shooting daily life scenes, combined with carefully selected ready-made products in line with his fictional plot, Liu mapping the ideology and stereotypes brought by history, nationality, and memory.

Liu's solos include *Fool's Paradise*, Magician Space, Beijing (2022); *Hehemeimei*, Art Basel Statements Sector, Basel (2021); *No Easy Symbolism*, and *Episode 1* were shown at Magician Space, Beijing (2018, 2016).

His works also have been exhibited at Economy of Means: *The 25th Gabrovo Biennial of Humor & Satire in Art*, Museum of Humour and Satire, Gabrovo (2022); *Tangle of Revolution and Political Soul*, Shanghai Space & Gallery Association, Shanghai (2021); *Performing Society: The Violence of Gender*, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2019); *Guangzhou Airport Biennale*, Guangzhou (2019); *Shards from the Mirror of History*, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago (2019); *Frontier: Re-assessment of Post-Globalisational Politics*, OCAT Institute, Beijing (2018); *The Ecstasy of Time: Reframing the Medium of Knowing*, He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen (2017); *The New Normal: Art and China in 2017*, Ullens Center of Contemporary Art, Beijing (2017); *VIDEOBOX*, Le Carreau du Temple, Paris (2017); *Digitale Körper in der Screen-Landschaft III - Projekte von Liu Yefu*, Goethe-Institut China, Beijing (2017); *OverPop*, Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2016); *No Dice (I)*, Kimberly-Klark, NY (2015), etc.



魔金石空间





Dreamy Dreamy, Yummy Yummy

2022

Rice paper

42 x 66 cm

有泉
dreamy dreamy, yummy yummy, 2022

The young girl confused last night's three-star-Michelin French cuisine with this morning's stomach ache in her dream.



Dreamy Dreamy, Yummy Yummy, 2022, rice paper, 42 x 66 cm



Dreamy Dreamy, Yummy Yummy, 2022, rice paper, 42 x 66 cm

MAGICIAN SPACE

魔金石空间





Bleu, Blanc et Rouge
2021
Rice paper
146 x 48 cm

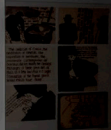
偶然出现在通往平等,自由,博爱之路上的绊脚石。

蓝白红 / S
bleu, blanc et rouge, 2021





刘野天：老刘—杭州菜家
Liu Yefu: Eold's Paradise
2023.06.11 - 07.23
策展人：陈立
Curator: Chen Li





王蒙 2021
World-Weary Family, 2021



World-Weary Family
2021
Rice paper
76 x 38 cm

World-Weary Family depicts a royal family of three preparing to jump off a cliff but accidentally the king and princess fall first.





Confessions of a Mask, 2021, rice paper, 26 x 16 cm

MAGICIAN SPACE

魔金石空间





Fool's Paradise, 2022, single channel HD video, color, sound, 16'16"

'The antiquated makes an attempt to re-establish and maintain itself within the newly achieved form.' Artist Liu Yefu's recent works expand from such a core idea. Liu visited the border region of Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia many times and filmed the life of his protagonist, Liu Huiqing. Despite his dire circumstances, the old man Liu Huiqing continued to practice traditional painting, calligraphy and writing about local vernacular culture. What his preservation of traditional Chinese society and culture represents is particularly contradictory to the current trend of seeking novelty with new benefits. In Liu Yefu's video work, *Fool's Paradise*, Liu Huiqing's old-fashioned way and Elon Musk's space exploration become two sides of the same coin that are the essentially the same: whether it is global, scientific, evolutionary and radical, or local, secular, ancient and conservative, how do we define 'new'? In his works, Liu Yefu probes the imagined interior and exterior with a highly charged visual language and insists on responding to the division of the contemporary world below secular life in this land. In this solo exhibition, Liu Yefu will present an eponymous video and a series of pottery and ink drawings.

<https://vimeo.com/724111100>

Password: [_magicianspace798](#)







中国美术学院 中国美术学院
中国美术学院 中国美术学院
中国美术学院 中国美术学院
中国美术学院 中国美术学院
中国美术学院 中国美术学院





Pottery Jar Series

Ten catties of clay and little water.
Hand and eye, push, pull and lift.
Into the kiln and raise the heat, from the jar top to the bottom.
Moderate size, holding salt and rice.
Marking with logo, engraving the whole.
In memory of old Liu, life and death in karma.
You know what ? I will tell you what.



正乙祠戏楼大罐
zheng yi ci opera house jar, 2022



Jar for Zheng Yici Opera house, 2022, pottery clay, 18 x 18 x 40 cm



Jar for God, earth, emperor, relatives, mentor, 2022, pottery clay, 18 x 18 x 25 cm



Butt plug – Study of Pao ware, 2022, pottery clay, 45 x 12 x 20 cm

Put the joint ideograms of God, Earth, Emperor, Relatives, Master onto the pao wares. You could both honor old Liu and breed caddisflies. Put it in your arms in winter and the heat from your body will reverse the seasons and makes the caddisflies to chirp.



MAGICIAN SPACE

魔金石空间

刘野夫：系列一 梦境黄粱
Liu Yefu: Foot's Paradise
2022.06.11 - 07.23
策展人：陈立
Curator: Chen Li Chen



The Stolen Mandarin/The Missing Mandarin

2021

Mandarin, Pottery clay

Dimension variable

Mandarin (a type of orange), of which China is the main origin, shares the same English word as Mandarin. One steals and the other loses again meaning a double entendre. Sometimes the language (native language) spreads like the crop and is adapted to the place. It's palatable but different, losing the taste of origin.





*The Stolen Mandarin/The Missing Mandarin, 2021,
mandarin, pottery clay, dimension variable*



His Inferno Majesty, 2021, rice paper, 194 x 122 cm

According to the synopsis, this comic strip is about the encounter between Old Liu and Dr. Carrel in a dream: Although Old Liu lives at the border of Shanxi, Shaanxi and Inner Mongolia, he concerned about the future of black, yellow and white people.

Fool's Paradise

It is said that the old Liu is now eighty-four years old, a villager of Shandai on the border of Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia.

Since he was classified as a scholar, he suffered humiliation in those years. His unfulfilled ambitions caused left him distraught. In the wake of the Sino-Vietnamese War, the situation at the frontline became tense; he vowed passionately,

“Don’t say that the scholar is only empty arguments.

Where he throws, his head will be stained with blood.”

He left abruptly for the south alone and didn’t expect to spend all his money halfway there. Looking unpresentable and his background unchecked, he was treated as a vagrant outlaw and sent to prison and tortured. After more than forty years of constantly moving around

alone, writing books, speaking world through pictures, and revising his genealogy, could he barely get by.

Recently, the old Liu felt that the future is unpredictable, so why not have an extravagant meal before the end? Then eggs were prepared, sweet potatoes, aged bean curd, leek, garlic, and daikon were peeled and washed. He cooked them with some used cooking oil and coarse salt. After he sat down, the two chopsticks looked like Huyan Zhuo’s double whips waving, riding clips, sedan chair clips, taking turns on the battlefield. He picked, plucked, fed, poked, parsed, and rolled until the plates were empty. Only then, the old man yawned, tossing and turning, diving into a trance and dreamed. His good friends and celebrities started to appear.

Elon Musk, a tall man shaped like Superman and Buzz Lightyear, graduated from an Ivy League school and engaged in national politics. He once contracted Covid-19 and wants to be buried on Mars as a tenant from Earth.

Alexis Carrel, a French surgeon eugenicist who worked for the Vichy government was said to have influenced Le Corbusier. If you have read his masterpiece, *Man, The Unknown*, you’d realize that he had concerns for his country

and its people; he wrote with urgency and vigor that reminds one of an observant traditional Chinese herbalist.

Yukio Mishima, a Japanese right-wing writer in Japan, who’s quite dramatic. He loved fitness and hated surrender. His final speech ended in embarrassment.

Junichiro Tanizaki, a Japanese writer, who loved Chinese food and squatting toilet, appreciated shadows also sexual desire for mothers.

m_a_9_s, born in the imperial capital, is a master of guqin among millennials, holding a “Fuxi” fabricated by Jun Tian Fang. She boasted her intoxication with ACGN many years ago, dressed either in contrasting bold colors or monochrome every day. She contributes to this film with the song “*Flowing Water*,” which she has not played for a decade, to remember the Voyager spacecraft with highbrow elegance.

Lil Ke, a six years old Chaoyang District resident who often practices Judo with his father. Owner of hundreds of Ultraman toys and a veritable

little emperor of the family. Someday, if he excels in school, he will definitely become a future Elon Fuck Musk.

Donald Rumsfeld, the two-term defense secretary of that beautiful country, cabinet minister of “war hawks,” and had a famous phrase, “Known unknowns....”

The old Liu approached Dr. Carrel with his hands held back and chanted a poem, “What an extraordinary coincidence! Wearing rags and living in shabby homes, having slices of bun and gruel, as long as my talent continues to flow. Skin and the Great Wall are both boundaries; external intervention and internal adjustment would allow me to live the rest of my life. There is no such thing as a previous generation, and sitting here, how are our lives different from what unfolds on stage? ” A breeze gave him a shiver. He stood up to wash his face and then went to visit a doctor humming a tune!

By Liu Yefu

Liu Yefu: Untimely

The antiquated makes an attempt to re-establish and maintain itself within the newly achieved form.

-- Karl Marx, Marx to Friedrich Bolte, 1871

Before discussing Liu Yefu's artistic creations, I would like to list a few incidents about language relevant to this work. In April 2022, CIA Director William Burns said in a speech at the Georgia Institute of Technology that the CIA plans to double the number of Mandarin-speaking employees in the coming years. Since 2006, the U.S. has spent more than 4 billion dollars on 72 seats on the Soyuz spacecraft from Russia. Since the U.S.-Soviet space race, the U.S. space program has long been set back by budgetary limitations. Therefore, learning Russian would accelerate American astronauts' careers. In 2002, Elon Musk founded SpaceX to reduce the cost of space transportation and

colonize Mars. Foreseeably, learning Russian no longer seemed necessary for American astronauts. In 1977, Guan Pinghu's version of "Flowing Streams" played by a guqin was selected by NASA to represent the sound of China for the Voyager Golden Records and sent into space with the spacecraft, representing the phonographs of cultures and life on Earth and symbolizing the human desire to communicate with the universe.

These types of information are always awe-inspiring but not rare. They are initiatives derived from a new wave of Cold War thinking and competition between powerful nations. It's apparent that languages and regional cultures serve here as political instruments and manifestations of cultural colonization. They constantly swing and evolve in shapes and forms, seemingly resorting to exploring the new but wrapped in pedantic and covetous conservative thoughts. These new initiatives and signals are woven into Liu Yefu's latest video work *Fool's Paradise*, using the "latest" as allegories of the "old." In juxtaposition, the "old" that has been so resolutely discarded is now

another clue that runs throughout the film: Liu Yefu visited the border of Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia several times and filmed the protagonist Liu Huiqing's life. Despite the old man Liu Huiqing's extenuating life circumstances, he insists on practicing traditional painting and calligraphy and writing about local vernacular culture. His adherence to the traditional Chinese society's village-based culture seems particularly contradictory to the current trend of seeking novelty with new benefits. While pointing to the ancient Chinese character for meaning, Liu Huiqing said, "Parents are one's relatives, teachers are masters," and drew the "Tesla" logo with a brush, underscoring the price we pay in the pursuit of rapid development, and that civilizational values based on conscience and rationality are gradually being lost. In the work's moving images, underneath the grandeur of rocket launches and space exploration are the ruins of the ancient Great Wall in a state of desolation and decay, where the quest for new energy is concealed in the name of perpetual contention. Three meals a day meet the basic needs of humans of sustenance, but unfitting

for the evolutionary thinking of the survival of the fittest. Liu intersperses the seismic changes in the world with the simple everyday life, compressing the paradox of progress and backwardness into an implosion of sensory experiences and emotions with fragmented audiovisual language. At the heart of his work lies the conceit and conserve of conventions, along with greed and prejudice of the unknown.

Liu Yefu's recent works revolve around the proposition of the imagined interior and exterior, and ask the question: whether in the frameworks of global, scientific, evolutionary and radical, or local, secular, ancient and conservative, what is "new"? Liu chose to respond to the current global divisions by insisting on the everyday life experience in China. This also reveals a phase shift in his art practice.

In Liu Yefu's early works, the experience of studying and living in the United States led him to choose outsiders and minorities in Western society as his subject matter: *3013: A Space Lover* (2013) portrays a woman who leads a

double life in a futuristic world. She works in an art gallery during the day and is a debaucher by night. Behind these falsely contradictory parallel lives, the work embodies confusion about the Western world and identity. Such a subjective contradiction is even more pronounced in *York News* (2014), where Liu Yefu huddles as a cross-dresser on a bench in New York's Central Park, who watches the social elites jogging with indifference or intrigue. American social news is fragmented throughout the moving images, presenting a capitalist landscape where distortion, violence, and hierarchical order coexist. Works from this particular phase became Liu Yefu's representative works for a long time. They are easily accessible, possessing relatively straightforward objects or stereotypical images of duality; they deal with the internal symptoms of the capitalist world; and to a certain extent, they satisfy the self-critical demands of the global discourse centered in the West. They may also be conceived as the artist's test or commentary who lived at the center but remained an outsider.

With Liu Yefu's return to Beijing, his work began to address local Chinese experiences from 2015 onward: *Linda* (2016) responds to the official audio guides of Western art museums with images and rhetoric from Chinese history and art textbooks, blurring the boundaries and authority of geography and information; *Ad, Proposals I, II, III, IV, V* (2017) features five fictitious advertisements in which international politics and racism permeate the entertainment and consumption model, presumably re-emphasizing its inherent absurdity and antagonism; in his 2021 work, *Hehemeimei*, the perspective from within China reaches an apex. Based on scenes of Beijing's urban life and historical references, Liu Yefu fictionalizes a future landscape of globalization, geopolitics, and economics. The images are mostly taken from China's Northwest regions, and the city of Beijing, calligraphic writing and painting in ink are interspersed throughout the film. Local visual aesthetics and the context of secular life reveal how the concept of "glocal" is imagined. Its aim demonstrates the ineffectiveness in attacking the universal solutions to the conflicts inherent in the contemporary world between conservatives and liberals, elites and grassroots.

It's evident that Liu Yefu's practice is explicitly grounded on local Chinese experiences provoking thoughts beyond geographical and regional limitations. This is also the case in this exhibition, *Fool's Paradise*. Still embracing elements of playfulness, humor, fragmentation, performativity, or a cynical-realist quality in his practice, Liu has neither abstracted this subject into a specific trope, let alone pander to the West, nor a local Chinese image in the established intellectual context. In addition to the formal language, I would like to emphasize that Liu Yefu portrays real-world strife by approaching vernacular life and local experience. It refers directly to the centrality of the West and the resurgence of global conservatism.

It is true that we don't have to acknowledge the differentiation of East and West and that such a binary perspective would undoubtedly put itself in antagonism. But it is undeniable that even if we do not adopt that viewpoint, worldly conflicts are still ubiquitous. In recent years, I have been working closely with Liu Yefu, and we continue to share our confusion about

working in the contemporary art world and the choices and directions we should take. How do we understand the land and culture we live in in this increasingly divisive time and geopolitical environment? How do we face the social reality that is not homogeneous? How do we deal with our identity? In this sense, I have always appreciated the choice made by Liu Yefu. It is clear that he has abandoned the Western world's expectations of the established impressions of Chinese artists and subject matters, a rejection of globalized landscapes, and regionalized sampling. He is even fearless in attacking and questioning the conservatism and conceit of the Western center through his works. For this reason, Liu Yefu's choice of objects to work with imbues his work with a kind of self-criticality, even at the risk of being held hostage by nationalism. However, he firmly bases his artistic practice on his life experiences. This honest and straightforward expression challenges the barriers to the perception and awareness of the viewer. When we look at Liu Yefu's artworks, they make us aware of present issues that are not only present here. They are all around you, no

matter where you are. We cannot be omniscient and omnipotent, but we should acknowledge our ignorance, perhaps the premise and meaning of why change happens.

By Leo Li Chen

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

magician.space
info@magician-space.com
+86 01 59789635
D, 798 Art Zone, Beijing
北京, 798 艺术区, D