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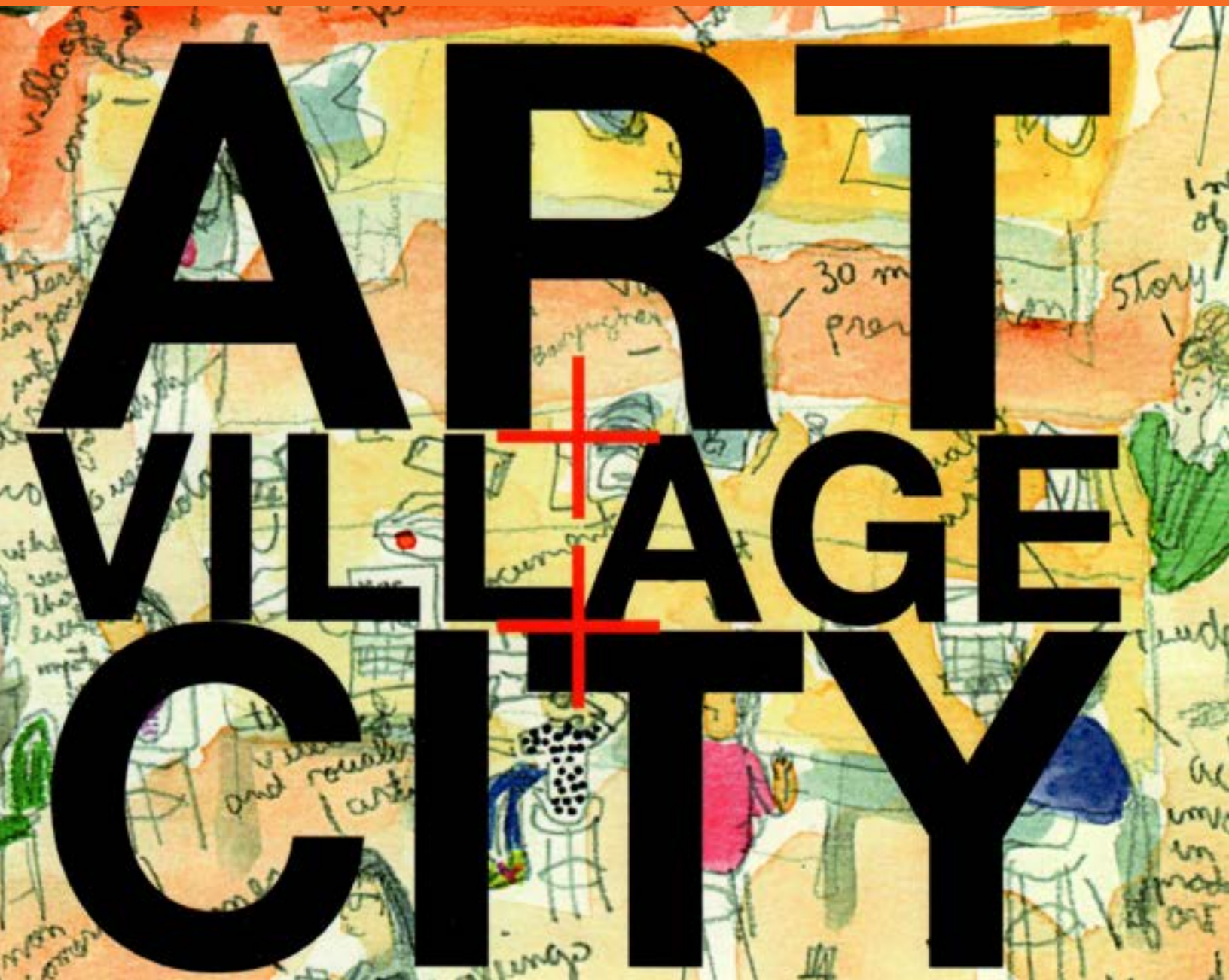
# ART+VILLAGE+CITY

IN THE PEARL RIVER DELTA

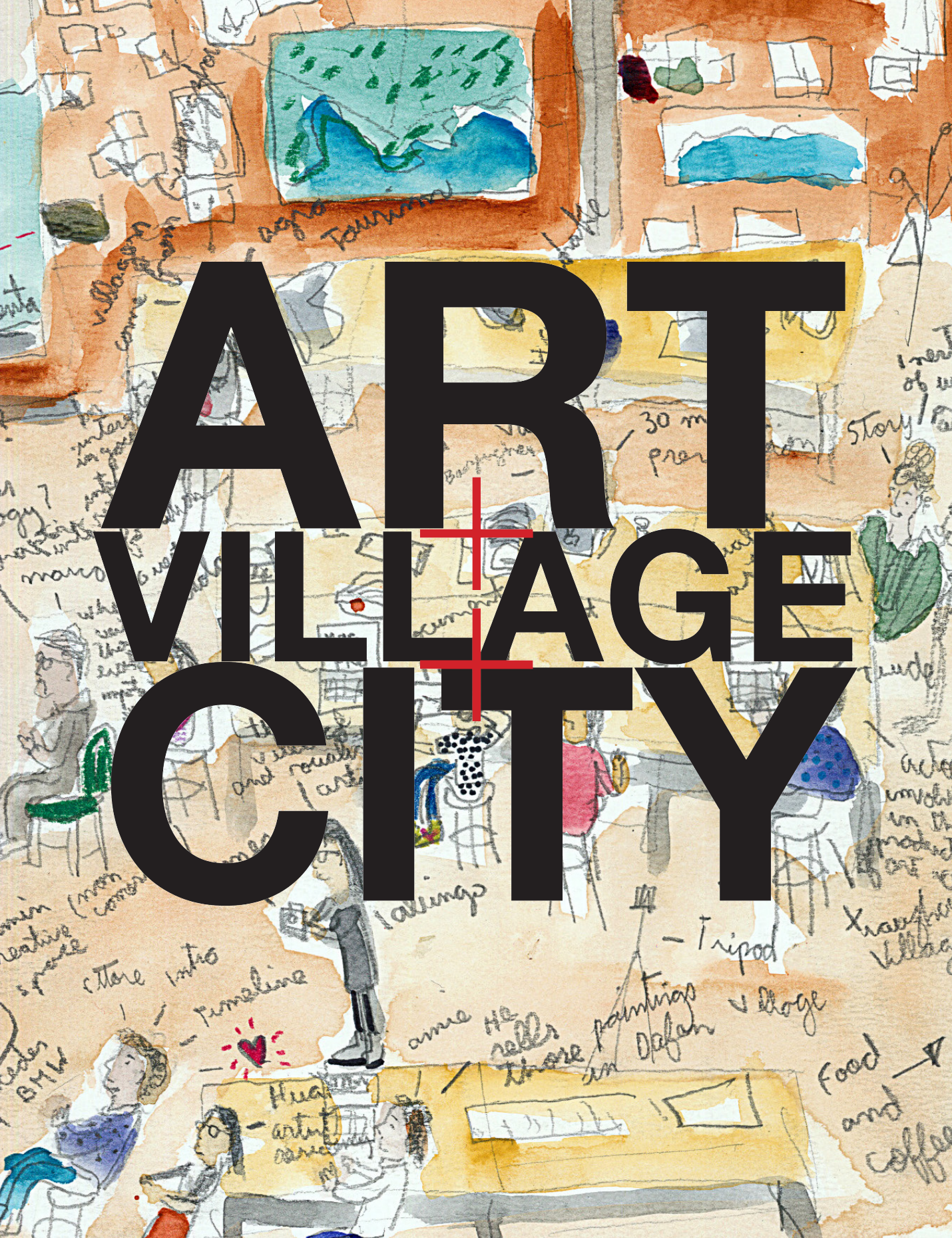
Global Urban Humanities Initiative

EXHIBITION

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# ART VILLAGE CITY





# ART VILLAGE CITY

in the **PEARL RIVER DELTA**

Global Urban Humanities  
Research Studio and Exhibition  
University of California, Berkeley

Studio Spring 2015  
Exhibition Fall 2015

<http://artvillage.city/>

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# ART VILLAGE CITY

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## Introduction

This exhibition is the product of a research studio focusing on the interactions between art, villages and cities in China's Pearl River Delta. It is the second in a series of three research studios sponsored by the Global Urban Humanities Initiative at UC Berkeley. Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the project is a collaboration between the College of Environmental Design and the Arts & Humanities division of the College of Letters and Sciences. Initiated and co-taught by Margaret Crawford (Architecture) and Winnie Wong (Rhetoric) during the spring semester of 2015, the studio critically investigated a wide range of urban art villages in the Pearl River Delta, exploring their historical development, current state, and future potential. These sites ranged from Dafen Oil Painting Village in Shenzhen, which exports hundreds of thousands of trade paintings around the world, to Xiaozhou Village in Guangzhou, where local artists and art teachers transformed village houses into studios and galleries, and to the collaborative architectural project of Japanese architect Fujimoto and Vitamin Creative Space in Guangzhou. During a spring break trip through the region, students documented and analyzed the ways in which villagers, artists, officials, migrants, developers and entrepreneurs leverage art practices in order to reimagine urban life and urban citizenship. Students and faculty then spent the summer transforming these research materials into an exhibition. The exhibition aims to communicate complex narratives without being reductive and to convey the physical reality of our sites through multiple media including video, dioramas, large-scale maps, models, ephemera and objects.

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# GUANGZHOU

A map of the Pearl River Delta region in South China. The map shows a complex network of rivers and waterways, with major cities marked. Guangzhou is at the top center, Foshan to the west, Dongguan to the east, and Zhuhai and Macau to the south. Two specific locations, Xiaozhou and Dongxizhuang, are highlighted with red dots. The map uses a halftone pattern for land areas and blue for water. A dotted line outlines a large area encompassing most of the cities shown.

Xiaozhou

Dongxizhuang

FOSHAN

DONG

## THE PEARL RIVER DELTA

In 2015, the World Bank declared South China's Pearl River Delta (Zhujiang Delta) to be the largest and most populous mega-city region in the world, with an area of 55,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 42 million people. Within the coastal triangle formed by the cities of Hong Kong, Macao, and Guangzhou, the region contains 11 cities including Shenzhen. In spite of intensive urbanization that produced dense and vast urban cores over the last three decades, much of the region can be characterized as "desakota," an Indonesia term meaning "village-city" that geographers use to describe highly heterogeneous land uses that mix agriculture with cottage industries, industrial estates, suburban development, and commercial activities. Currently, government plans for the economic and physical integration of the area are underway, with the construction of massive new infrastructure and the expansion of urban jurisdictions.

IGSHAN

ZHUHAI

MACAU



GUAN

HAIZHOU

SHENZHEN

Baishizhou

Dafen

HONG KONG

## The Studio

Professors Wong and Crawford conceived of Art + Village + City as an open-ended inquiry into the human condition in the built environment through the interdisciplinary tools of urban studies and the collaborative ethos of design practice. 12 graduate students in MLA, MS, PhD, MFA and MCP programs represented the disciplines of Landscape Architecture, Architecture, Architectural History and Theory, Anthropology, South East Asian Studies, Art Practice, Urban Planning and Art History. Students and professors were from the US, Venezuela, Chile, China, Italy and Canada. Bringing frameworks, methods and questions from these fields, they worked together in their studio, Wurster 491, filling the space with research materials and hosting scholars from inside and outside the university. José Figueroa, a MFA student regularly documented the class meetings and trip in these live watercolor drawings.





map

map



Ummie

projector

JALENTINA

Katie

Me

ETORE

Patterns that write

MARGARET

Mony stewart

MY phone

Brittany

cal fe







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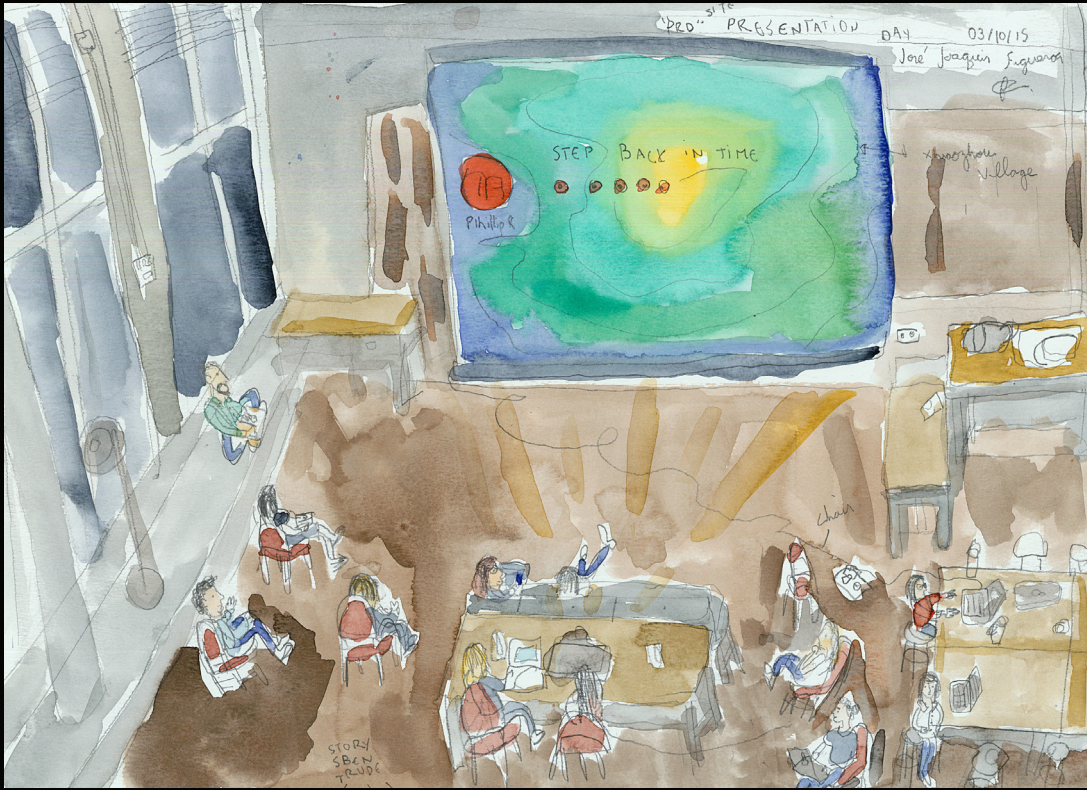
To create a common set of methods, the first assignments introduced different modes of research and documentation. For four weeks, students investigated local sites, experimenting with videos, maps, interviews, photographs, soundscapes, anecdotes, categories, facts and other forms of representation. Individuals and pairs shared their work in class “crits,” a pedagogical **method** borrowed from architectural design studios. Questions, often reflecting different **disciplinary backgrounds**, immediately arose about the nature of these forms of representation. Were photographs necessary or even desirable? Was it legitimate to edit videotaped interviews? What are the boundaries of a site, and what can video, sound, narrative, or interactions capture about it? We also watched two Chinese documentaries: *People’s Park*, a film about the life of a Chengdu park, filmed in a single long shot; and *The Last Train Home*, a film that told the unhappy story of a single family of rural migrants to the PRD.

A key question was the nature of art practice in contemporary China. How does one become an artist in China today? Through readings, lectures, and discussions, we began to understand that many art practices remain closely linked to the state and its institutions. This includes art education, with a system of art academies whose degrees certify artistic legitimacy as well as support from all levels of government for cultural interventions, exhibitions and even housing for “official” artists. Two guests described their experiences with art in China.

**Liu Hung**, a Chinese artist based in Oakland, told her life story through her paintings, which draw from photographs and other historical sources. She described sketching and painting as a sent-down youth during the Cultural Revolution, and later work as a mural painting major at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. She immigrated to the US in 1984 to study at UCSD under Allen Kaprow. She taught painting at Mills College for over two decades, and has exhibited widely in the US.

**Mary Ann O’Donnell**, an anthropologist and Shenzhen resident, presented Handshake 302, a non-profit experimental space. Housed in a rented apartment inside Baishizhou urban village, Handshake 302 brings artists, architects, planners, and other Shenzhen residents into Baishizhou for weekly events, discussions, and art practices. We made plans to meet Mary Ann again in Shenzhen.

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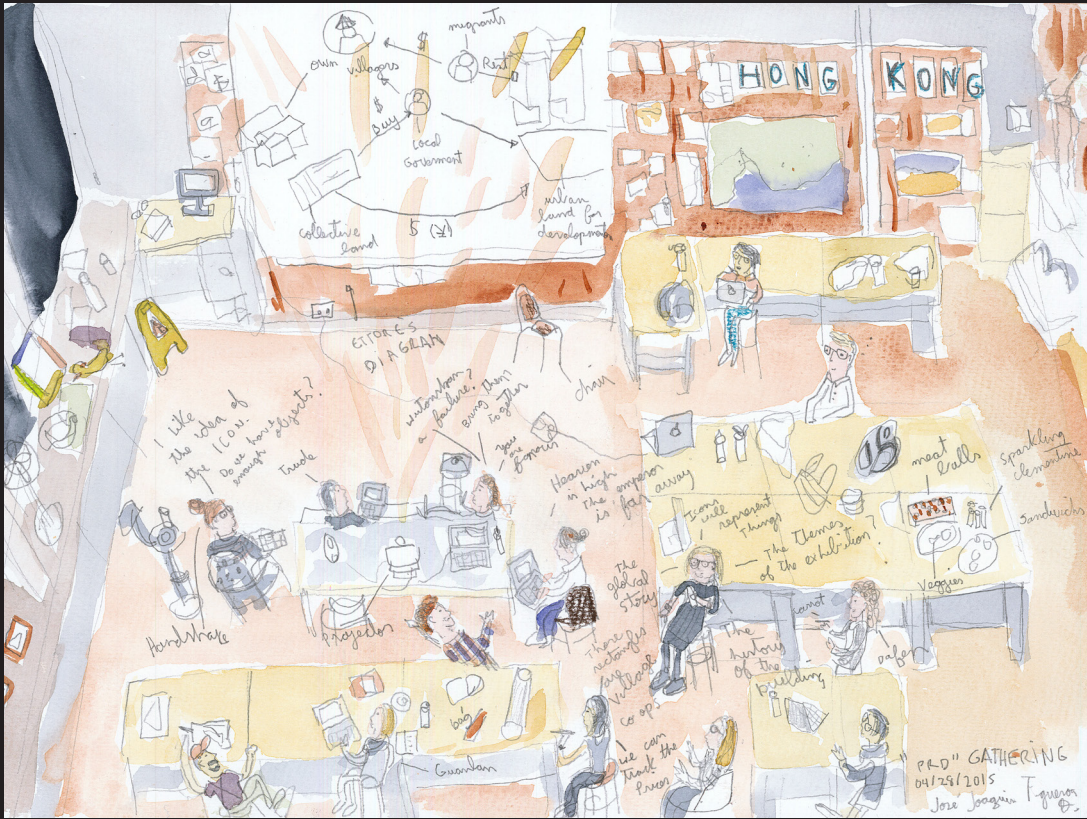


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Before leaving, we familiarized ourselves with the sites we would be visiting. Only 4 of the 12 students had previously been to China, (although one, Xiuxian Zhan, was a native of Zhuhai, on the west bank of the PRD), so there was much to learn. We studied maps, defined the unique history and status of villages in the region, and worked out the intricacies of the household registration system (*hukou*). This allowed us to understand the differing status and rights of the people we were likely to encounter in the PRD. For example, a **Shenzhener** or **Guangzhou person** is someone who holds urban hukou status in that city. **Villagers** or **Original Villagers** are inhabitants who hold rural land-use rights or shares in their village corporation. Depending on their village's current situation they may hold rural or urban hukou. **Temporary Residents** are long term legal residents of the city who hold a temporary residence permit. They are usually **Migrant Workers**, rural-to-urban migrants, peasants who have become workers. They hold rural hukou from their home villages. A **Three Withouts Person** is someone residing in the city without three important things: a legal residence, a job, or a fixed abode.

The studio walls began to fill up with information and photographs as we made the final preparations for the trip. By this time, the studio had become a familiar gathering place. We ate lunch together around our communal table and lounged on the couch to watch presentations. We celebrated Sben's birthday with a Hong Kong style cake from the Sheng Kee Bakery. Although students had individual desks, most collective work took place around the center table. Unlike a lecture hall or seminar room, **the studio space** was intended to function outside of class time as a workroom, a meeting place, a repository of collective materials and a hangout. Even more than most academic design studios, the studio's ethos, with teamwork and common ownership of research, functioned like architectural practice. Planning the complex logistics that would take us around the PRD, we were excited but also nervous about what we would find.

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Returning from the trip, we got to work organizing the materials collected in our **fieldwork**. Since each student was assigned to return with 1000 photographs, ten interviews, five videos and daily field notes, we had massive amounts of documentation to digest and display. We pinned up (another technique borrowed from the design studio) and started the difficult and sometimes contentious process of deciding what was important and what could be eliminated.

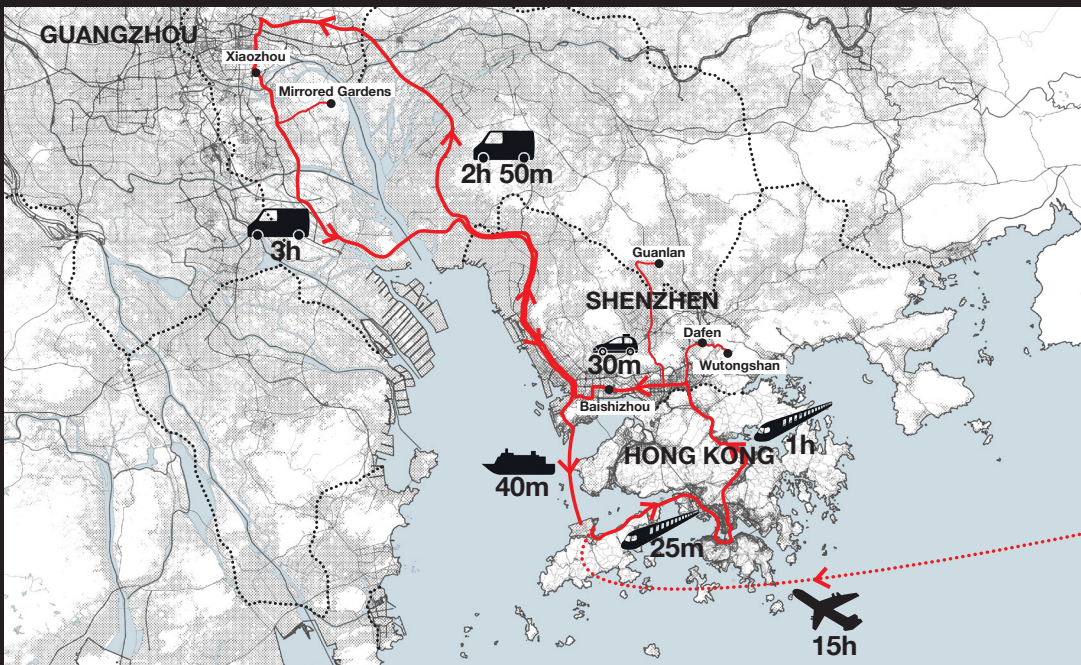
All this led up to the **final review**. It lasted for eight hours, with no lunch break! Each student presented a section of the research, divided into twelve topics. Eight **invited critics** represented a range of disciplines and professions, including UC Berkeley professors Ann Walsh (Art Practice), Marco Cenzatti (Architecture), Michael Maseuch (Rhetoric), Ralph Croizier (University of Victoria), Chinese art curator Xiaoyu Weng (Guggenheim Museum), Chinese City Planner Chengfang Wang (Visiting Scholar from Guangzhou) and Dean of the College of Environmental Design Jennifer Wolch. They listened attentively and commented, sometimes critically, on the presentations. Although clearly exhausted by the onslaught of material, they hung in there, offering insights and suggestions. We celebrated the end of a long day with a group Sichuan dinner at Chengdu Restaurant.

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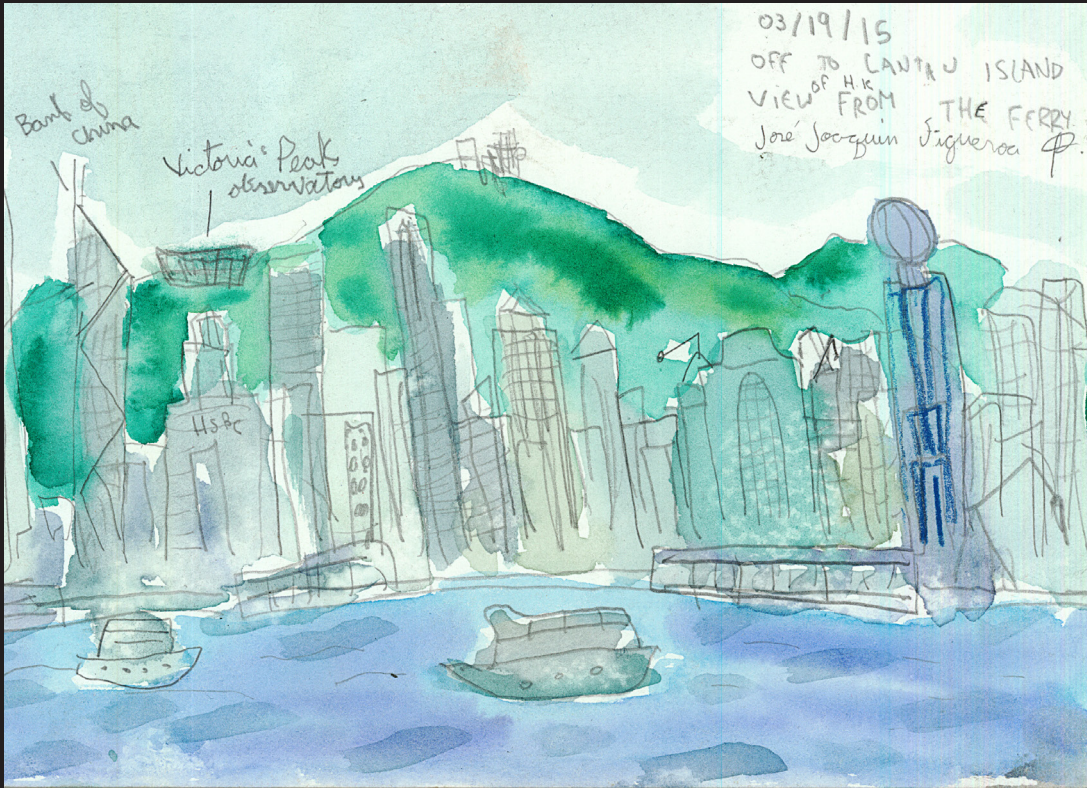
## THE FIELDWORK

In late March, the studio took an intensive two week trip to the PRD. Students formed *ad hoc* teams and conducted fieldwork in over twenty five sites of art/culture, and urban villages in Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. We interacted with a broad range of people, conversing in English, Mandarin and Cantonese, by ourselves and through translators.

Over the course of our trip, we endeavored to take every form of transportation that was available. In Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, we took advantage of their ultramodern subway systems. To reach tourist attractions, we took a cable car. Our rented minivan and driver drove us on the new highway from Shenzhen to Guangzhou, which runs along the water's edge by the Delta. Since the van couldn't accommodate everyone, three of the students rode the new bullet train, reaching 300 kilometers an hour. In Xiaozhou, we walked for miles, took motorcycle taxis, buses, taxis, and learned to use the Chinese version of Uber (Didi Taxi). In rural areas, some of us rented bikes and rode on the back of tractors. We hired a new driver and van to take us around Guangzhou and back to Shenzhen. Finally we rode the ferry from Shekou back to the Sky Pier at the Hong Kong International Airport. Along the way, we were astonished by the extreme diversity of the urban and rural landscapes. As seamless highway infrastructure led us from dense high-rise urban areas to subtropical rural villages, we noted the innumerable construction sites, the constant presence of industry, the persistence of traditional ancestor halls, and, finally, the sight of polluted skies everywhere.









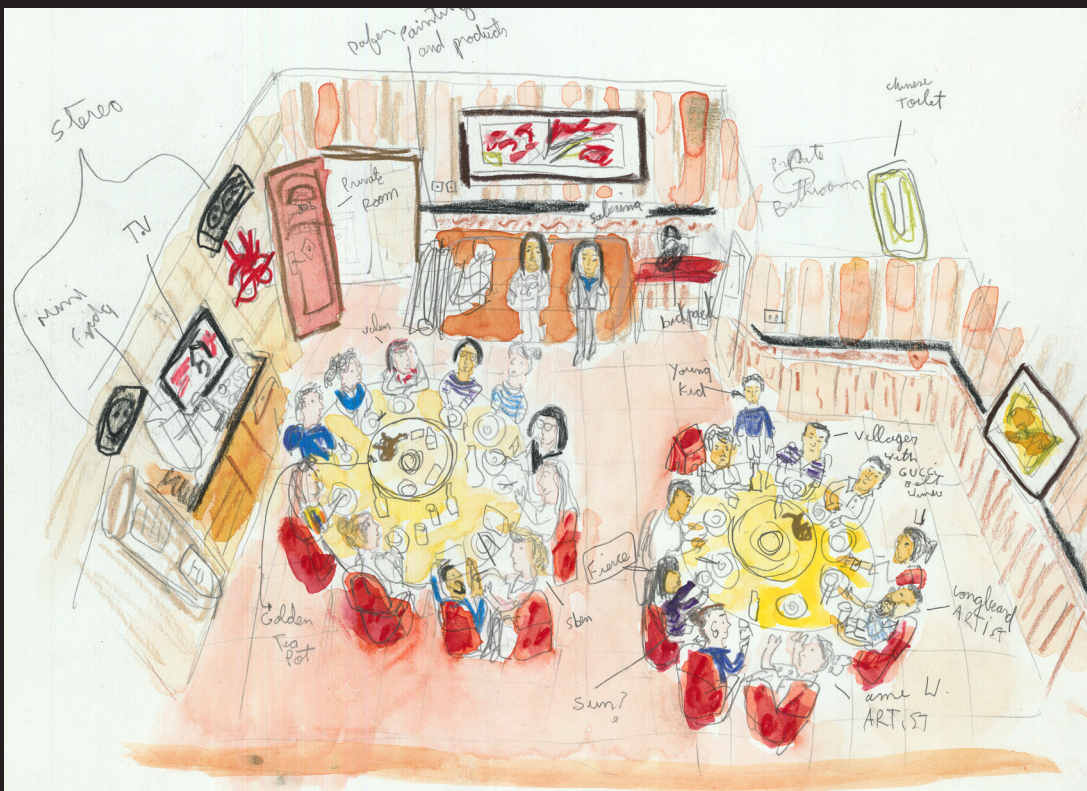
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Landing in Hong Kong, we stayed in the Island Pacific hotel in Sheung Wan, the western part of Hong Kong Island. Students separated for expeditions to different sites: the Big Buddha and Tai O village on Lantau Island, the Blue House in Wan Chai, the Kowloon Walled City Park, the Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail and the Hollywood Road area in Sheung Wan. We shared a seafood dinner near the hotel with Hong Kong artist **Evelyna Liang** and architecture historian **Max Hirsh**. In the notorious but eclectic Chungking Mansions, we met the artist **Leung Mee-Ping** for Indian food. Students explored the dense metropolis, walking around Central's shopping malls, riding the Mid-Levels escalator, enjoying the greenery in Hong Kong and Victoria Park, and investigating the new PMQ creativity-themed mall on Hollywood Road. Hong Kong was our gateway to China. For those who had not been to China before, Hong Kong initially seemed exotic, but for those who returned, it seemed far more familiar than Shenzhen or Guangzhou.

Less than an hour after leaving Hong Kong's Hung Hom station, we crossed **into the Mainland**. At the border checkpoint building, we changed currencies and SIM cards on our phones, noting the differences from Hong Kong. We settled into our base at OCT Loft, Shenzhen's arts district, which is full of hip shops, galleries and restaurants. At the CityInn art-themed boutique hotel, some of us stayed in graffiti inscribed with drawings and phrases in Chinese and English. At "Porridge" restaurant, we sampled the regional Chaozhou cuisine of rice porridge and kungfu tea.

The next day, teams separated to visit OCT's theme parks, Splendid China and Windows on the World, or took the subway to the Louhu Commercial City, a mall specializing in fakes, or to Shenzhen's new art museums and its monumental civic center. We reconvened at dinner, joined by Shenzhen anthropologist Mary Ann O'Donnell and Berkeley art practice professor Anne Walsh. That evening we ate in OCT's InOut, a minimalist designer restaurant featuring Northeastern cuisine.

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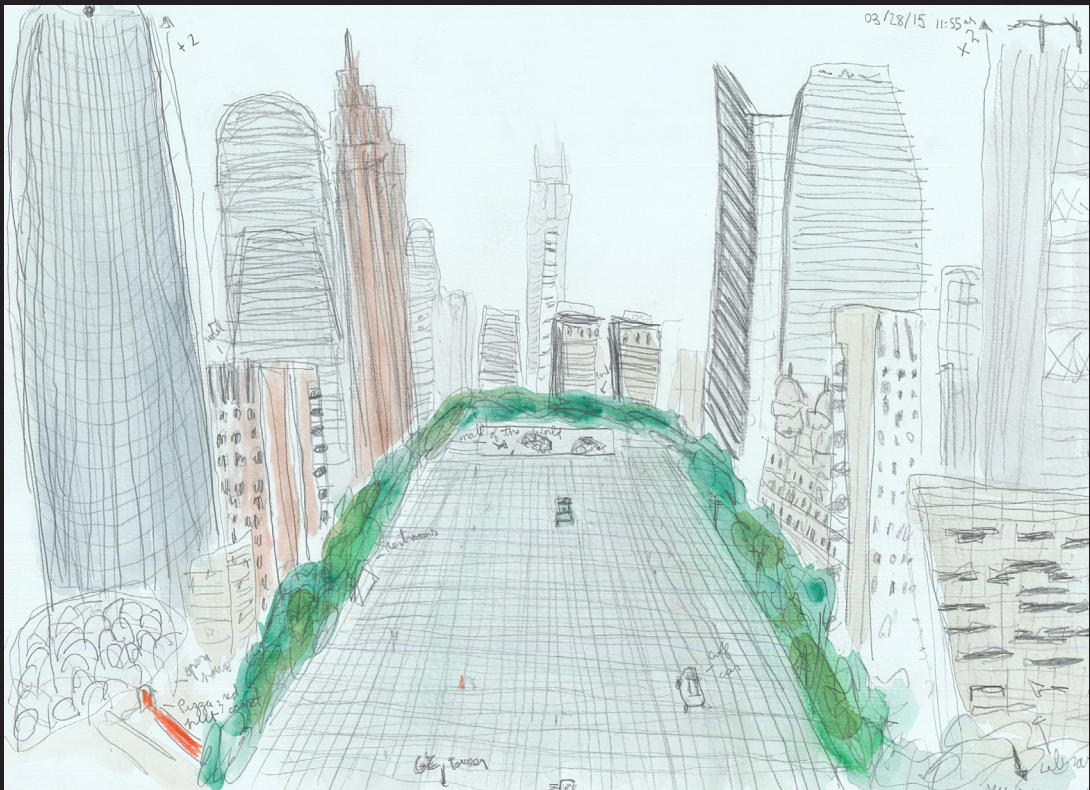
The entire group visited Dafen Oil Painting Village, subject of Winnie Wong's book, *Van Gogh on Demand*, and one of our key sites. We took the new, ultramodern Shenzhen Subway to reach the village, on the outskirts of the city. Looking out the window we could now read the urban landscape, easily identifying the city's numerous urban villages. Since we are already familiar with Dafen, we built upon existing scholarship by mapping a whole street, and drawing the interior activities of an entire building.

We met the painter, **Zhao Xiaoyong**, who for twenty years has specialized in the production of Van Gogh paintings, pictured on the cover of Winnie's book. He operates Impressions Gallery, which is the only workshop in Dafen village to specialize in the production and wholesale of Van Gogh paintings.

Dafen village is a **Hakka village**. Hakka (*kejia*) is a Han ethnic group of southern China. We ate dinner in Dafen's best Hakka restaurant with an original villager (Liu Zhifei), a boss, Cai Chusheng, and three painters, Zhao Xiaoyong, Yin Xunzhi and Wang Xuehong along with their wives and children. Since all of them were from different regions, and since these groups rarely interact socially, the Dafen inhabitants interviewed each other. After dinner we went to Karaoke (KTV) at the Tomorrow Hotel.

We met every morning at a Starbucks in OCT Loft to debrief and make our plans for the day. For some of us, coffee became a basic necessity of fieldwork. One team visited Handshake 302 and the urban village **Baishizhou** in the company of Mary Ann O'Donnell. Others headed out to the officially sponsored **Guanlan Original Printmaking Base**. A redesigned Hakka village, adjacent to Mission Hills, the world's largest golf course resort, it celebrates socialist-era woodblock printer Chen Yanqiao and offers residencies to printmakers from around the world. Other students visited **Wutongshan**, a mountainside village slated for creative industry development by the government. The presence of numerous spiritual seekers there inspired Annie and Jose to return there at the end of the trip.

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Our next stop was **Xiaozhou village** in Guangzhou, where we spent five days. Abingo (Jiong) Wu, our course GSI, having just finished her dissertation fieldwork in the village, welcomed us and gave a slide talk to explain its history and current issues. Abingo, a Zhuhai native, studied at Guangzhou's South China University of Technology (SCUT). We settled into our accommodations, the Skymedo Inn made up of several traditional village houses and a tower around a courtyard, and the Liu Shui Guang Yin Inn, a village house. The friendly innkeepers, Ducheng Huang, Tuo Loy, Sige and their new baby, welcomed us and offered pizza, their specialty. That evening we met Prof. **Ye Hong**, Margaret's research partner from SCUT, Prof. Marco Cenzatti from UC Berkeley and their students at the Eco-Park open air restaurant.

To put village art in context, we also explored Guangzhou's **art scene**, visiting the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts' (GAFA) lush central campus, where we met a faculty member and observed students working from life models. We stopped at the Redtory Art Factory, a repurposed industrial site now housing galleries, restaurants and cafes, and Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou's avant-garde gallery, located in the middle of a marketplace in Kecun. On our way to Vitamin's Mirrored Gardens in Panyu, we ate lunch at the agricultural restaurant, Pigeon Haven, but no one had the courage to order its specialty. At Mirrored Gardens, we met founder Hu Fang and gallery assistants, and checked out Olafur Eliasson's work on display. By popular demand, we made a quick stop to see the city's **showcase CBD (Central Business District)**, Zhujiang New Town, with its Zaha Hadid Opera House and Rocco Yim Guangdong Museum.

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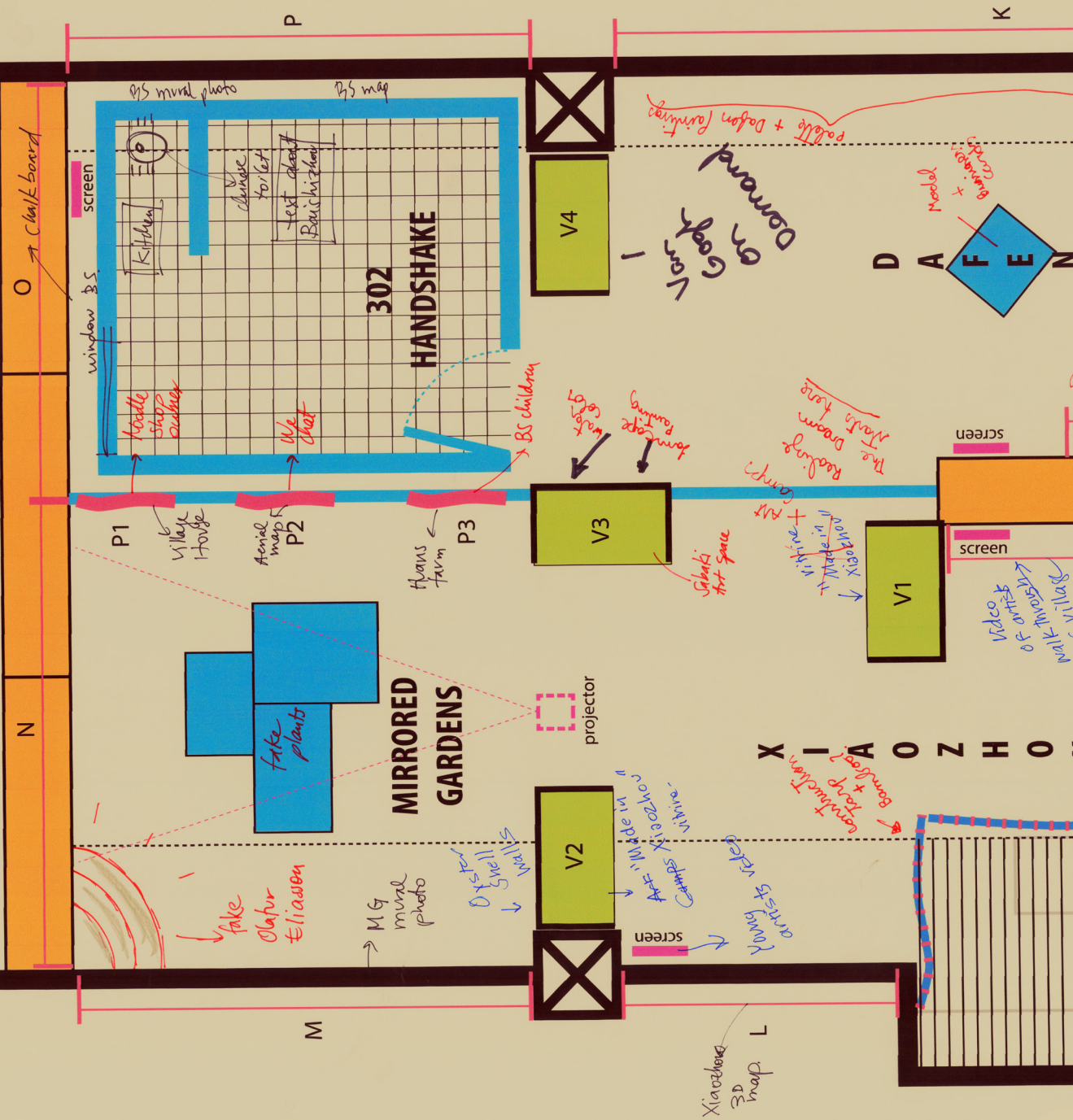
Back in the village, we met our volunteer **interpreters**, Cai Yanjun (Isabel), Huang Xi (Cecilla), Rong Hao (Luke), Xie Linshen, Zhao Zhilan (Andrea), students from GAFA, SCUT and the University of Hawai'i. They not only helped us converse with artists and villagers but added their own valuable understanding of local people and places.

As in Shenzhen, students split up to investigate different locales. Sben, Xiuxian and Story returned to thoroughly document **Mirrored Gardens** and investigate the nearby **Dongxi Zhuang** agricultural village. Annie, Jose and Brittany visited **Nanting Village**, next to the undergraduate campus of the GAFA, Susan and Genise went to **Huangpu**, an historic anchorage, now attracting tourism and art activities. Exploring the **Huayuan** gated community with Abingo, Ettore cooked spaghetti for a resident to facilitate their interviews. Valentina, Trude and Katie explored Xiaozhou Village, and Jose discovered Prof. Duan's large and elaborate studio in the orchards. Genise documented the galleries under the freeway. Margaret, Abingo and Genise went to a filmmaker's furniture workshop to watch his documentary film.

Life in Xiaozhou started to fall into a pattern. We ate breakfast in the market, where the traditional and delicious Lapchang (rice noodle roll) was only 6 RMB (\$1). Coffee, a visible signifier of the village's **bohemian lifestyle**, was available in multiple cafes. The gracious Ms. Yanxia Hui served us dinners at her Fei Coffee Restaurant. Max Hirsh and Dorothy Tang from Hong Kong University joined us there one evening. Dust from the village's **continuous construction** gave us sore throats and sinus problems. Brittany got so sick that she had to decamp to the University Island's SCUT hotel to recover. On our next-to-last day in Xiaozhou, we finally experienced Guangzhou's famous morning tea at the popular and elaborate Full Moon and Flower Dim Sum restaurant on the Eco-Island, just outside of the village. On the last night we had a party with our interpreters, filmmaker Changrong Lin, his wife Li Huang and their baby along with Clarence Gu and his friend, young artists from the GAFA on University Island. The next morning at 6am, our driver, Liuwen Su, packed the students into his largest van and headed for Shekou and the ferry back to Chep Lap Kok, Hong Kong's International airport.

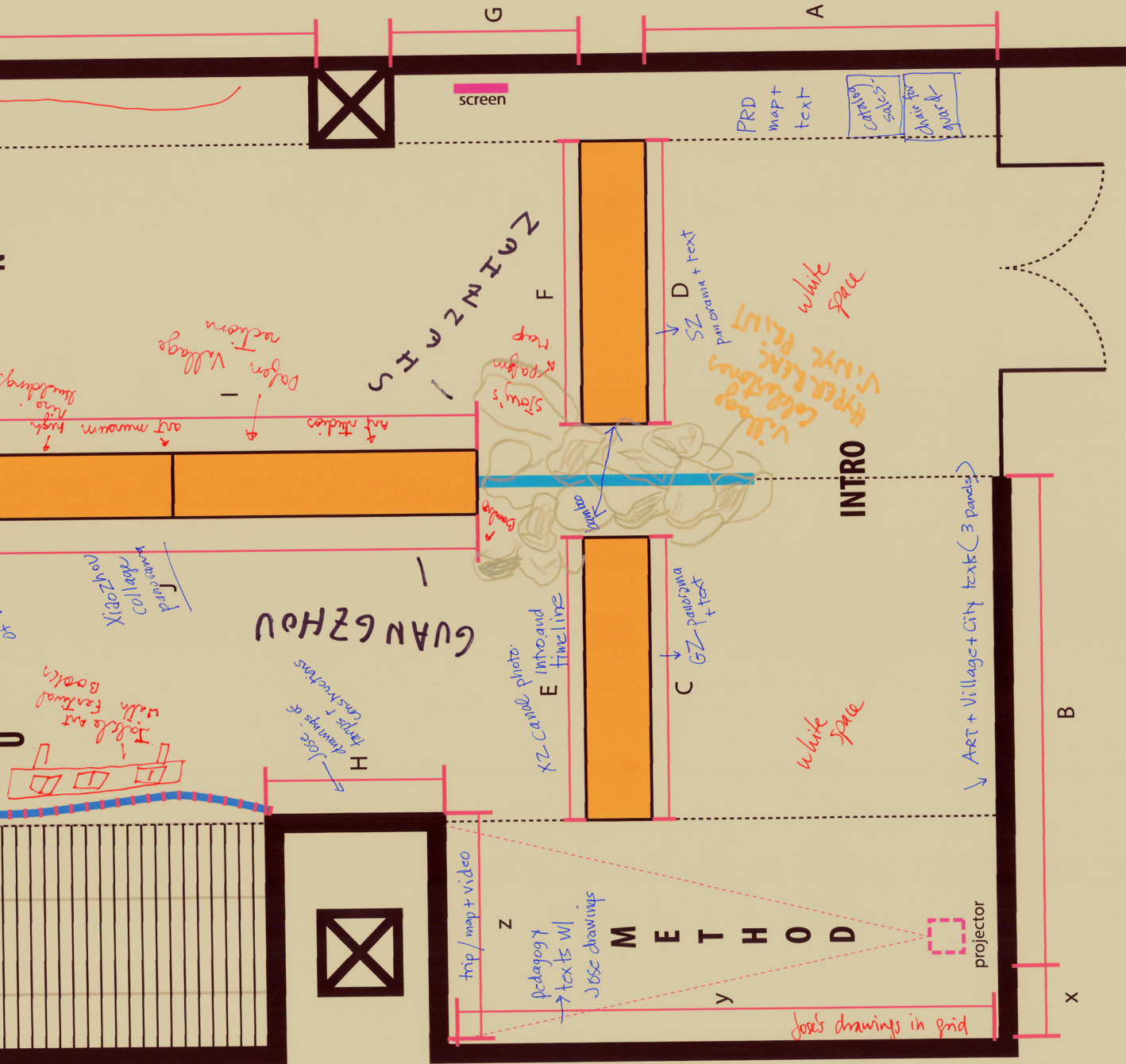
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# The Exhibition





Wurster Gallery, University of California, Berkeley  
October 9 - November 14, 2015





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# ART

Art in contemporary China is supported by two major sources of funding and cultural relevance: the art market and the party-state.

The art market in China spans the very high and the very low end of prices: from top-dollar international buyers, collectors, and auction houses, to the consumer wholesale market of decorative paintings. This diverse range can be seen in two sites of this exhibition: Guangzhou's Mirrored Gardens is one of the premier new gallery spaces that exhibits top Chinese and international artists, while the consumer market is centered in Shenzhen's Dafen Oil Painting Village. Art made for the market is produced in many media, by artists of all walks of life, and often speaks in subject matter to urban and cosmopolitan audiences and buyers. The cultural arms of the Chinese state and the cultural organizations of the Chinese Communist Party are also major sponsors of art in China. Together they fund and administer a host of institutions that train, exhibit, and support artists. The wide cultural influence of these institutions can be felt in this exhibition at Guangzhou's Fine Arts Academy, one of the top five art academies of China, but also in Shenzhen's Handshake 302, a community arts organization supported with a small grant from the city government's Urban Planning commission. Admission rates to the top Art Academies is only about 3%, hence academy graduates in China form an elite and influential cultural network. Yet this does not stop many youths, migrant workers, or retirees, from pursuing the dream of becoming an artist.

In 2005, Jiang Zemin inaugurated China's cultural and creative industry policies, spurring, for example, plans to build 1000 museums in under 10 years. The government perceived cultural power and soft power as a foreign policy tool. These policies culminated in the current leader Xi Jinping's policy of the "Chinese Dream," a discourse of individual self-realization for the purpose of national ascendance on the global stage.

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## + VILLAGE

In the Pearl River Delta, villages have a unique political, cultural and physical status. Most are based on centuries-old lineages, with villagers claiming a common ancestor and sharing the same surname or ethnic identity. The Chinese constitution gives villagers rights to control their own land and build their own houses. As rapid urban growth surrounded these once-rural enclaves, villagers transformed themselves into landlords, expanding their houses to accommodate the huge influx of rural-to-urban migrants. The sheer number of villages (1600 in Guangzhou, 1000 in Shenzhen) and struggles over land have created issues for municipal governance. But since village chiefs are democratically elected, the villages of the PRD are also incubators of political reform and the site of many political protests. Current policies now incorporate villagers into their cities, replacing their rural *hukou* (household registration) status with urban status. However, villagers have used their collectively-owned village land to establish corporations, retaining significant control over their land and housing resources. Their distinctive settlement forms, with dense clusters of tiny buildings, are immediately recognizable, anomalies in the PRD's modernizing cities.

This exhibition showcases two types of village-city conditions: In Shenzhen, Dafen and Baishizhou are "villages-in-the-city," densely packed places completely surrounded by urban development. In Guangzhou, Xiaozhou and Dong Xizhuang are "villages-by-the-city," lower density communities set within agricultural fields and orchards. Both types of villages, offering low rents and flexible spaces, captured the interest of artists, entrepreneurs and government cultural officials. Dafen initially attracted thousands of rural migrant workers to produce high volume "hand-painted art products." Later the local district promoted the village as China's first Model Cultural Industry.

In Baishizhou, where, like Dafen, rural migrants vastly outnumber local villagers, the complete absence of cultural activities led a group of artists, designers and scholars to found Handshake 302. In Guangzhou, the successful transformation of several Beijing neighborhoods, Yuanming Park, Beijing East Village and Caochangdi, into globally famous "artists villages" encouraged artists of all kinds to settle in Xiaozhou. Still largely occupied by villagers, Dongxizhuang and Xiaozhou offer picturesque settings, with historical and natural features that appeal to urban residents seeking the charm of rural lifestyles, but with easy access to the city.

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## + CITY

The process of urbanization in the PRD is highly complex and localized; Shenzhen and Guangzhou have significant historical, cultural and demographic differences. Shenzhen is a comprehensively planned modern city known for urban innovations such as China's first skyscraper, first McDonald's, first theme parks, first stock exchange and first private property sales. It is one of the most diverse places in China, where recent immigrants from all over China mix, along with their local cuisines and customs. In 2004, Shenzhen officially abolished all its villages, becoming "the first city in China without villages." City planners renovated and demolished numerous villages, the original settlements in the area.

In contrast, Guangzhou still retains many historic districts, along with numerous prestigious universities. The city is known for its intensely Cantonese culture, with a unique language, cuisine, and culture. Guangzhou was a pioneer in the opening up period, but, in 1994, found itself lagging behind Shenzhen and Zhuhai city. Planners completely reoriented Guangzhou around a new axis and built two completely new CBDs to replace its aging center city. As part of this redevelopment, the city government planned to eliminate all of its "villages in the city." So far, however, they have only managed to destroy three villages.

These differences extend to divergent cultural policies. Shenzhen's newness and international outlook led the city to support innovative technology firms, media companies, cutting-edge architecture, and innovation in the medical and biological science industries. In 2010, Shenzhen was named a UNESCO "City of Design," and Shenzhen is currently home to China's top social media firms and its largest *Maker* community. By contrast, Guangzhou's longstanding cultural eminence is focused around elite institutions, including the Fine Arts Academy, the Guangdong Painting Institute, and several distinguished art museums that host internationally respected events such as the Guangzhou Triennial.

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# SHENZHEN

Located just across the border from Hong Kong, Shenzhen is a new, prosperous and highly modernized city, built entirely within the past 35 years. Its explosive growth began when Deng Xiaoping established the country's first Special Economic Zone here in 1979. One of the world's densest cities, Shenzhen houses 13 million official residents in 1999 km<sup>2</sup>. Shenzhen's population consists of migrants from all over China, and its urban culture is characterized by this diverse representation of all regions of China. Mandarin is the lingua franca among these migrant populations of the city. Government plans are to combine Shenzhen and Hong Kong into a single megacity called "Shenkong" by 2020.

## **Shenzhen Art Villages**

*Dafen Oil Painting Village:* The World's Largest Production Site for Oil Paintings

*Handshake 302 in Baishizhou:* Socially-Engaged Practice in an Urban Village







# DAFEN VILLAGE



03/22/15 "Van Gogh on Demand"  
Joé Joaquín Figueroa P.

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# DAFEN VILLAGE

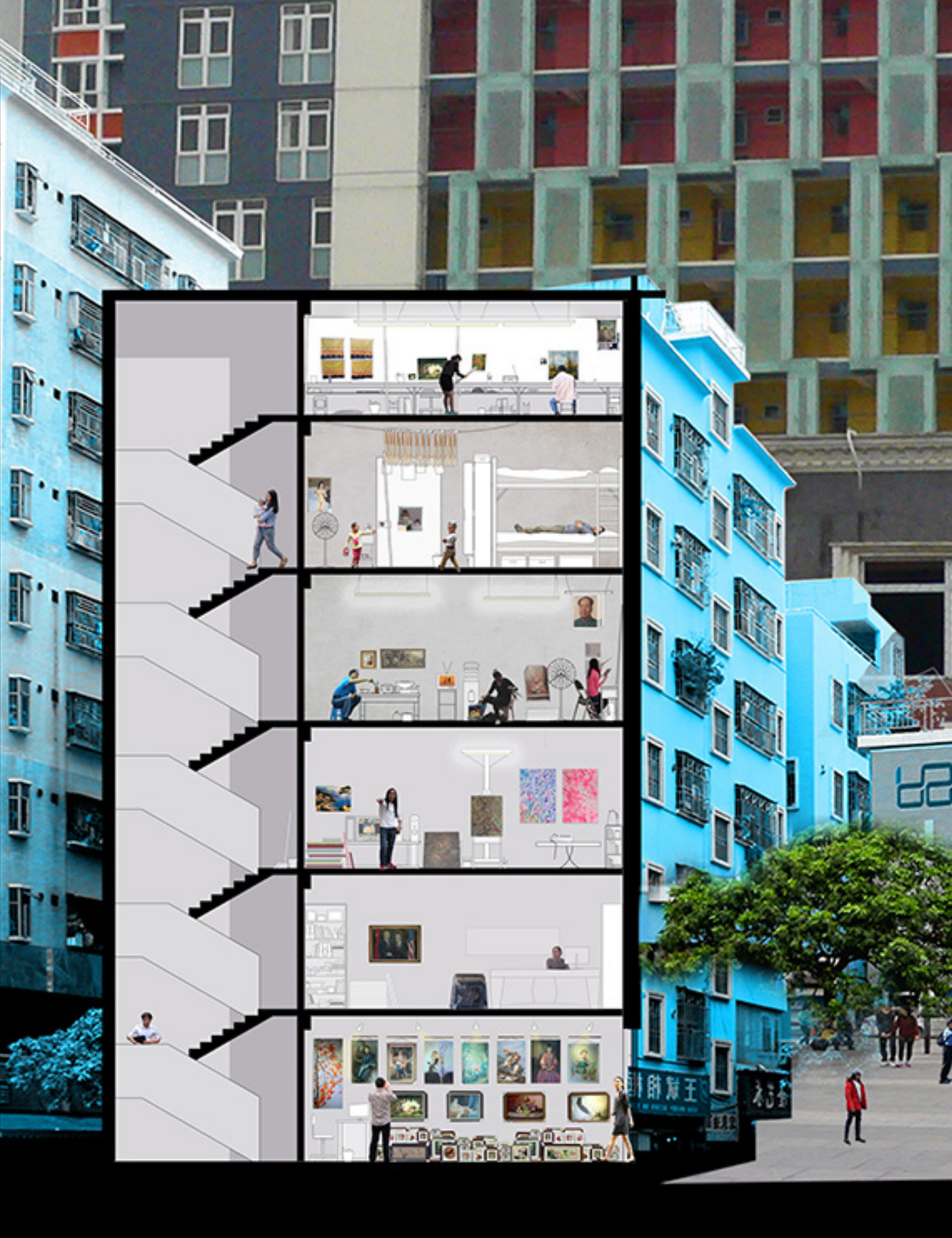
**Dafen Oil Painting Village** is the world's largest production center for oil-on-canvas painting. In 2006, at its height, it housed an estimated 8000 painters, who produced five million paintings per year. Dafen is a **village-in-the-city** of Shenzhen, a city that has attracted uncountable numbers of rural migrant workers seeking a way to make a livelihood. Because all of their paintings are sourced from photographs or the internet, Western observers deride Dafen as a factory of "forgers." In fact, these painters' practices are not so different from those of any professional painter in the history of art, except that they produce a much higher volume of work. Dafen means many different things in Shenzhen. It is a prominent art village, a major tourist attraction, and even a set location for some movies. In 2004, the Central government named Dafen a **model cultural industry**. Since then officials have initiated policies to assist painters and their families with urban rights, intellectual property law education, and the fostering of creativity through the support of "original" art. Architects have decided that Dafen is an urban village that deserves preservation rather than demolition. For many Chinese people, it is a place where anyone can realize his or her dream of becoming an artist.





## Urban Context

Dafen village is a dense collection of high-rise towers and smaller village structures of 6 to 10 stories, completely surrounded by the city. Its location northeast of the city center was only 3km outside the former internal boundary of the city. This boundary once separated the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone from the city's poorer outer districts, and for much of Shenzhen's history, all Chinese citizens needed to obtain special permits to enter the Special Economic Zone. Thus, Dafen was both accessible and cheap to live in, for those unable to obtain permits. In 2010, the checkpoint was decommissioned and today a subway line passes over it, connecting Dafen with the entire metropolitan region and finally allowing its resident painters to travel freely in the city.



## New Village

In 2004, after building numerous 'handshake' buildings on their village plots to be rented to small firms and migrant workers, and as the city continued to appropriate the village's collective land, Dafen villagers laid out a plan to build themselves a New Village. They chose a green spot near a small mountain, and quickly constructed nine six story buildings before the government could stop them. The village developer had initially planned for ten ten story buildings with underground parking and elevators but other villagers thought it was too expensive. The New Village, completed in 2006, is spacious and airy, with two tennis courts and a swimming pool. Villagers gather in the large community hall and kitchen to celebrate festivals, holidays, weddings and births. 98% of Dafen's 346 villagers live together here.

## Government developed housing

In 2008, the district-level government built a large mixed-use development on the edge of Dafen village. For this project, the district-level government served as both planner and developer. They built three residential towers with three floors of commercial space, surrounding a large plaza. They intended these to be used for art galleries and other associated functions but most stand empty today. In 2010, the government provided subsidized housing in one of these towers to twenty painters who had won Dafen's annual copying competition and passed professional exams. Later, all painters who could prove a adequate professional qualifications could apply for this subsidized housing.

## Galleries

In 2004, street-level painting galleries, selling directly to middlemen, clients, and tourists began appearing in Dafen village, after the local government improved the village's basic sewage and roadway infrastructure. Between 2004 and 2006, 600 registered galleries were opened. Galleries enable painters and small bosses to find their own clients. Buyers visit Dafen from all over the world to place orders. The largest numbers are from France, Italy, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, and Israel. Dafen paintings have been seen on sale all over the world, including at Mont Blanc, Hyde Park, Central Park, and Piazza Navona.



## Independent Studios and Training Centers

Once they have completed an apprenticeship and can rely on orders from their teacher, a boss, or other associates, Dafen painters rent apartments in Dafen's handshake buildings where they live and paint. Most convert the living rooms into working studios, where each painter has a painting board and workspace. They hang their paintings from the ceilings to dry and reserve the bedroom for sleeping. Many male painters rely on the assistance of their girlfriends, wives, extended family, and apprentices to help them complete orders. Women painters, however, can rarely appropriate the labor of their male partners. Generally though, when painters have many orders Dafen painters take on apprentices and when they have few, they take on paying students. As a result, anyone can learn to paint in Dafen.

## Residential tower

Dafen's painting market is closely linked to the global residential property market. From 2000 to 2008, the global property bubble supported more than 80% of Dafen's output. Millions of paintings per year were exported to Hong Kong, South Korea, Israel, Germany, Russia, Italy, and Morocco, then often re-exported to the United States to be sold in furniture, frame, and souvenir stores. After the 2008 global financial crisis, Chinese property development continued to grow, so Dafen turned out paintings for the domestic market. In the early 2000s, the gated development that towers over Dafen, typical of middle-class housing in China, was built. Each flat is renovated and furnished by the owners, so they need Dafen paintings to complete the look.



## Art Museum

In 2002, China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage announced that China would build 1000 museums by 2015. Soon after, an official at the Shenzhen city government's urban planning commission, Zhou Hongmei, began advocating for a museum to be built in Dafen. A cutting-edge Shenzhen architecture firm, Urbanus, won the competition to design the museum. The museum was completed in 2007 and then handed over to the local street-office government. Unfortunately they never implemented most of the programming envisioned by the city government and the architects, intended to integrate Dafen's painting trade with its surrounding communities. These officials had ideas of their own about art, culture, and the function of a museum. Dafen painters and bosses nicknamed the museum "the giant toilet" for its high construction and maintenance costs, and its propensity to leak.





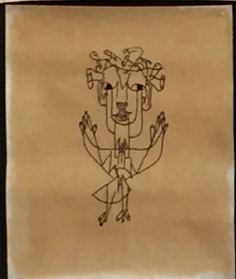
## PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY



José Figueroa  
*Dafen Village Kindergarten*  
 Local watercolor on artist board, local frame  
 March 22, 2015

José Figueroa set up his watercolors in front of Dafen Village's colorful kindergarten, located in the village's central square. Scholars consider Shenzhen and Dafen village to be very progressive in improving the welfare of rural-to urban-migrant workers and their families. In Dafen village, a few painters who have demonstrated long term residence and professional skills are permitted to send their children (with rural *hukou*) to the local kindergarten and elementary schools. However, migrant worker families still face the problem of high school fees, and many of their children are not eligible to attend Shenzhen's high schools. Since most painters in Dafen village paint from photographic sources, the ability to paint from life is often considered to be a practice of "originality." While painting this image of the kindergarten, José attracted the attention of many children from the school, as well as tourists, visitors, and other painters, who commented on his ability to represent the kindergarten building.







Anonymous  
*Landscape*  
Oil on canvas  
6" x 8"  
1980s



**Cai Chusheng**  
Dafen Artist Boss

"No matter how bad a painting is, there will eventually appear somebody to buy it."



Cai Chusheng is from a village in the Chaozhou region of Guangdong province. He came to Dafen in the early 1990s, following a co-villager who was already a trade painter. After working in various workshops, he eventually trained himself to paint as many as 26 paintings a day, using a special set of paintbrushes he modified himself, and relying on his wife to prepare the backgrounds. Every day for about two years, he worked at high speed to produce small decorative oil paintings like the landscape shown on the left.

Eventually Cai built up enough clients to open his own gallery and workshop in Dafen. Today he is the boss of Huidan Arts & Crafts, a medium-sized firm in Dafen that subcontracts to a network of about 75 painters. He has a keen sense of modern design and furnishes interior decorators with complete orders of paintings, decorative sculptures, and murals for high-end Chinese hotels. Since the 2000s he has completely stopped painting in oils for the trade. In recent years, with more leisure time, he studies ink painting and calligraphy with an artist from Hong Kong. This painting is one of his weekly "home-work" studies, a gift to the UC Berkeley team after their visit.

Cai Chusheng  
*Garden of Wishes Fulfilled*  
 Ink and colors on paper  
 63" x 18.5"

March 22, 2015



**Liu Zhiwei**  
Dafen Villager

"I've vacationed in 60 countries in the world now. The best place to shop is Japan. The best place to sleep is Dubai. America? It's nothing much. But everything is so cheap! Look at this Gucci belt I bought, only \$290!"



**Zhao Xiaoyong**  
Van Gogh painter at Dafen

"...then we went to Van Gogh's grave, in Auvers, outside of Paris. It was a misty, rainy day. We burned cigarettes for him, one cigarette at a time, until the whole pack was finished. It kept raining, and we kept burning, but not one cigarette went out. Truly, it was mystical!"



**Andy Choy**  
Abstract painter at Dafen

"[To do a painting...] Sometimes it takes two hours, sometimes twenty minutes. Sometimes ten minutes...I also paint landscapes and figurative paintings, but I like painting abstracts the most. Because when painting them I can instantly break out my passion."



Dafen diorama  
75" x 60" x 31"

# HANDSHAKE 302 & BAISHIZHOU VILLAGE

In many times  
out space 03/23/15  
Handshake, Shenzhen/China







平安如意

好足浴推拿中心

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## OVERSEAS CHINESE TOWN

In the Maoist era, this entire area was the Shahe agricultural collective. In the early 1980s, the 12.5 km<sup>2</sup> area was divided into two parcels: Overseas Chinese Town (OCT) and Shahe Enterprises. OCT takes its name from one of the agricultural collectives made up of Chinese people from Southeast Asia who repatriated during the Maoist era to support socialist China. In the Reform era, OCT was incorporated as a state-owned enterprise (SOE) with a management team made up of educated professionals from China's major cities. Shahe, on the other hand, remained managed by its former collective leaders, and therefore retained its village social structure and built environment. In the 1990s, when light manufacturing became less profitable, the SOE developed OCT into a modern district that includes theme parks, golf courses, housing, hotels, shopping malls and renovated factories housing creative industries. Shahe, in contrast, remained less developed. Its five villages are now lumped together as Baishizhou, a dense urban village surrounded by luxury and tourist developments.

## BAISHIZHOU

Baishizhou is the largest urban village in Shenzhen's inner districts. There are several active government plans to demolish Baishizhou, because officials find the urban village, set in an upscale area, intractably chaotic and unmanageable. It has a total area of 74 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of 140,000 residents, of whom roughly 20,000 hold Shenzhen hukou and 1,880 are local villagers. This means that as many as 120,000 uncounted inhabitants rely on its central location and affordable housing. The population density of Baishizhou breached 189,000 people per square kilometer in 2013, more than twenty-five times that of the rest of Shenzhen—which is already the fifth most densely populated city in the world. In Baishizhou, there are an estimated 2,340 “handshake” buildings, with an estimated 35,000 units. Monthly rents ranged from 700 to 3,000RMB for a one room apartment.

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Shahé W Road

Baishizhou North

Residential

4

5

7

1

6

Portofino

Shennan Road

Shopping Mall

Holiday Plaza

Sand River Golf Club

Shahé Road

Baishizhou South

2

8

Residential

3

Windows of the World

Baishi Road

Residential



Mixed development

Qiaoxiang Road

Mixed development

Happy Valley

Yanhanshan Country Club

OCT Loft

Mixed development

Shopping Mall

Hotel

Shopping Mall

Cultural Center

Museum

Splendid China

Residential

## HANDSHAKE 302

Handshake 302 is housed in a rented half-apartment inside Baishizhou urban village. It was founded in 2013 by Mary Ann O'Donnell, Zhang Kaiqin and many other creative Shenzhen inhabitants. It hosts public events, discussion forums, and artist's residencies inside this tiny space. Since Baishizhou residents are primarily migrant workers who wish to leave as soon as possible, Baishizhou is like a community without a community. Yet, although Handshake 302's community is brought together by art, its founders do not claim to make it. Rather their activities are in keeping with many socially-engaged art practices around the world. These are some recent Handshake 302 projects.



Source: Shenzhen Noted by Mary O'Donnell

### Village Hack Artist Residency (2014)

The Handshake 302 "Village Hack" residency program invites artists, writers, scholars, and curious citizens to explore Baishizhou, a large, centrally located urban village in Shenzhen. Each resident asks and answers a simple question over the course of their one- or two-week stay in Handshake 302. For example, a Village Hacker might ask the question, "What do my neighbors do for fun?" or "Can I live in Baishizhou without air conditioning?" Each day, the "village hacker" posts the results of their experiment on the group blog "Village Hack". The last day of their stay, the resident holds an open house, when friends and guests can learn see, hear, smell, touch and perhaps taste the results of hacking Baishizhou. The findings might be a series of photographs, a poem, or a reading of a stream of consciousness freewrite.

Source: Shenzhen Noted by Mary O'Donnell



### **My White Wall Compulsions (2014)**

This project grew out of a desire to play with the space itself. The form of the project was to overcome limited exhibition space by extending the time necessary to create and view installations. Each participant had two weeks to transform one wall of the space. During this time, they would also host two salons, open to the public. The walls and the artful play that ensued revealed much about how Shenzheners think about urbanized villages, handshake rentals, and the tough work of immigrating.

Source: Shenzhen Noted by Mary O'Donnell



### **Baishizhou Superhero (2013-2014)**

In this installation, Liu Wei's playful cartoon characters transformed Handshake 302 into a magic telephone booth. Visitors step into the space and through the power of a photo stand, become one of seven urban village superhores: Methane Man, Wonder Granny, Stir Fry Fly, the Amazing Beer Babe, Village Guardian, Super Dog or Cat-a-go-go. Friends can take pictures of each other as they model the most common social roles of Shenzhen's urban villages.



**Mary Ann O'Donnell**  
Anthropologist, Handshake 302 Founding Member

"Handshake 302 brings people into Baishizhou to explore what it means to be here. And this year's big project is working with the community culture center to do a series of lectures and field trips to teach children how to use Shenzhen's free art resources."



**Zhang Kaiqin**  
Artist, Handshake 302 Founding Member

"I consider Handshake 302 to be an experiment, it is an experimental space, even I could not really figure out if we should call it an art space. Some friend suggested us to call it 302 Art Space, I really doubt that....Handshake 302 is a thread to connect us to our friends and to the urban village. When we invite our friends and call them artist some of them don't feel comfortable, they feel that they probably shouldn't be called artists."



**Noodle shop owner**  
from Hebei Province, working on the groundfloor of Handshake 302's building

"The landlord is a Shenzhen original villager, all he wants is to collect rent. He moved out ages ago to somewhere else to live. And instead rents these ruins of a building to us....Every day I am busy working until 11pm, how would I have the leisurely mood to participate in those art activities?"



Handshake buildings are buildings that are built so close that neighbors can shake hands through their windows. In Shenzhen's urban villages, villagers built handshake buildings of 3-7 stories to rent to migrant workers. This space where Handshake 302 is located represents one half of an apartment in a three story building. It features a squat toilet, a space for a hotplate, and one half of a window. However, because the next building is very close, it never gets any daylight. The rent is 1100RMB/month (or roughly US\$150/month).



# GUANGZHOU

Known in the West as Canton, Guangzhou is an ancient city whose recorded history begins in the 3rd century BC. The third largest city in China after Beijing and Shanghai, Guangzhou's 12,385 million official residents live in an area of 7,434 km<sup>2</sup>, incorporating many agricultural and natural areas. As the capital of Guangdong province, it is the site of many major cultural institutions and famous artists, the cultural center home of southern China's Lingnan art and traditionally Cantonese-speaking culture. Guangzhou is home to several political activist movements, including the highly influential newspaper Southern Weekend, and is a pioneer of urban policies in the nation.

## **Guangzhou Art Villages**

*Xiaozhou Village:* A Bohemian Art Village linked to the Art Academy

*Mirrored Gardens:* Connecting the Global Art World with Rural life





# XIAOZHOU VILLAGE





MADE IN CHINA  
Mitsubishi  
Cable  
SUN TUBES

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## XIAOZHOU VILLAGE

Xiaozhou Village is a traditional Lingnan lineage village with the primary surname Jian. Dating back to the Ming dynasty, the village's vast "ten thousand acre orchard" of fruit trees has shaped its destiny. After the Reform and Opening Up period began, the municipal government's insistence on preserving the orchards prevented the village from industrializing, like most nearby settlements. As a result, many villagers remained in their traditional houses, set along narrow lanes and picturesque waterways. Others left the village for jobs or undertook home-based manufacturing, using their wages to upgrade and modernize their houses. This produced a broad spectrum of housing types and living conditions.

The village's charm, greenery and clean air attracted artists. In the late 1980s, the municipality asked the Village Committee to give building sites to high-level government-supported artists to construct their own houses. Later, artists expelled from the villages on the new University Island moved here, followed by graduates of the Guangzhou Fine Art Academy and visiting foreign artists. Students came for affordable housing, urban white collar workers came for alternative life styles, and shopkeepers came for new business opportunities. Unlike most urban villages, in Xiaozhou migrants and villagers interact, their social and economic networks giving the village a cosmopolitan quality.

On weekends the village is crowded with visitors, mostly young people from the city who stroll its picturesque lanes, stopping for cappuccinos or shopping for hand-made goods. Families visit the galleries or pick fruit, then eat in the numerous restaurants that have sprung up under the freeway or by the orchard.

The village continually transforms itself. In 2002, Xiaozhou lost its village status and became urbanized as a neighborhood of Guangzhou's Haizhu district. Villagers received urban *hukou*. Starting in 2011, the village gradually sold its orchards to the city government which built an Eco-Park, designed by the famed Beijing landscape architect Kongjian Yu. The proceeds financed an ongoing building boom, adding density to the village core. As rents have gone up, students and artists have started to move to other villages nearby, like Huangpu, Shenjin, and Nanting.



办证刻章  
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超市

**c1400** (Ming Dynasty) Xiaozhou village is settled.

**1953** Founding of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

**1959** Maoist rural collectivization. People's Assembly Hall built.

**1986** Municipal government awards the artist of the Guangdong Painting Institute land use rights to establish a gated residential district.

**1990-1993** Famous artists Guan Shanyue and Li Xiongcai move to Xiaozhou.

**1993** Municipal government establishes its protection of the Ten Thousand Acre Orchards.

**2000** Municipal government designates Xiaozhou village a "historical and cultural protected area." Many artists and craftsman move to the village.

**2000** Municipal government begins construction of a new urban axis and CBD, Pearl River New Town.





**2004** University Island (Guangzhou Higher Education Mega-Center) opens. The island contains the undergraduate campuses of ten Guangzhou universities, including the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. "Studentification" begins in Xiaozhou.

**2007** Art Training Camps boom begins.

**2008** Village Government sponsors the first Xiaozhou Art Festival. The same year, the galleries under the freeway are built.

**2009** Guangzhou Planning Commission funds art scene tourism.

**2011** Municipal Government begins acquiring the Orchards, in order to preserve the area from development.

**2012** People's Assembly Hall becomes the You You Contemporary Art Center. The Guangzhou Live performance art Festival moves to Xiaozhou.





**Young Artist**  
Xiazhou resident

“The village is not so special or meaningful. It only stands for cheap rent and a comparatively cozy environment. Frankly speaking, it is not such a good place. It is more like a shelter. People here are not willing to communicate with others. They are living inside their their own world.”



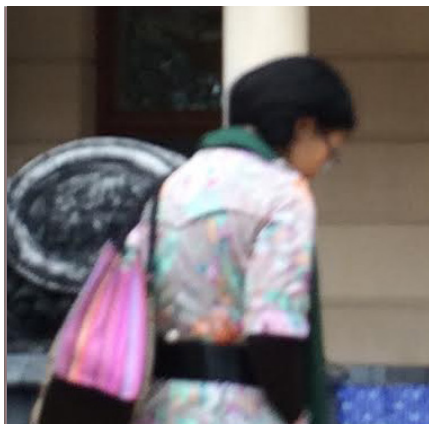
**Addhamhm**  
Guangzhou on TripAdvisor, Feb 22, 2015

“A cute little artist/hipster/canto maze of a town—friendly and more relaxed than Guangzhou’s concrete high-rises and shopping malls”



**Jiong Wu**  
UC Berkeley PhD Candidate

“What attracts me most about Xiazhou is its ‘mixing’ character. Not only its mixing physical landscape with different types of architecture and land use but also its mixing social landscape. You can see various social groups, local villagers, urban white collars, artists, students, small business people, migrant construction workers, form dynamic economic and social networks. You don’t see this in other villages.”



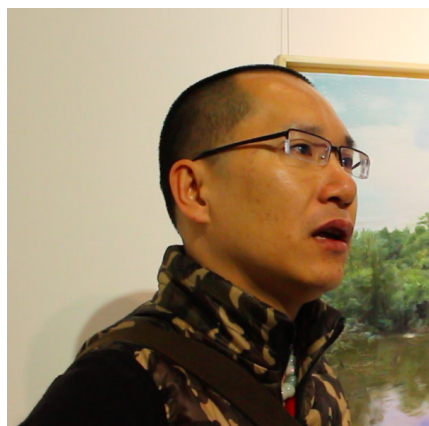
**Local Official**  
Xiaozhou resident

“People from the city think this is a village but people from the village think this is part of the city”



**Amateur artist**  
Retired Xiaozhou resident

“This is a place with a lot of character. I first came here in 1997. I loved it--it was so quiet and had great air quality. In 2009 I retired and moved here. The village was really beautiful so lots of artists came here. But the old houses are humid so the villagers need to build new ones. The government tried to make it into a tourist place but it failed. I don't know why.”



**Li Shu Xin**  
Professor, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts

“In the past the village was good and a real place with folk architecture but because there are so many schools there it became profane....they have made the place ordinary when it used to be elegant.”



## ART MAGNET

Beginning in the 1980s, supported by the village leaders and district government, Xiaozhou attracted many different types of artists, who occupy multiple sites. Estimates of their numbers go as high as 1000, including craftspeople and gallery owners. Galleries and studios can be found all over the village, in the Art Zone under the freeway, in former industrial spaces in the orchards, and have expanded to nearby apartment towers and to Nanting village, 2 km away on University Island. In turn, art activities have generated new bohemian forms of commerce such as inns, cafes, crafts shops and boutiques. Much of the village's art-making activities are invisible, taking place in studios that are off limits to visitors. Others become visible only on weekends or during special occasions such as the Action Art Festival. Held in the You You Contemporary Art Center, a repurposed Mao-era meeting hall, it attracts performance artists from around the world. The Xiaozhou Art Festival, sponsored by the District government, showcases local artists and galleries. Like the village, Xiaozhou's art scene is always changing. The Hua Yuan (Provincial Painting Institute) community, where artists settled in the 1990s, has become a high-end gated precinct, with few resident artists. Other artists, deploring the recent construction boom and proliferation of art camps, are moving away. But many new graduates from the Guangzhou Art Academy still find Xiaozhou, with its reputation as an established art platform, an attractive place to live and work.





**HAIZHU DISTRICT GOVERNMENT**  
The Municipal District Government immediately overseeing the Xiaozhou Village Government



**GUANGDONG PAINTING INSTITUTE (HUAYUAN)**  
An elite institute of senior painters sponsored by the provincial government



**GUANGZHOU ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS**  
One of the top five art academies of China, established in 1953



**XIAOZHOU VILLAGE GOVERNMENT**  
Local governing body administering Xiaozhou, with an elected village chief

**GUANGZHOU ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS UNIVERSITY ISLAND CAMPUS**  
Undergraduate campus of the art academy, situated on a recently developed island on which 15 Guangzhou-area universities also house their undergraduate campuses and dormitories



**ART TRAINING CAMPS**

Private training firms offering high school students drawing and painting education geared towards passing the annual art academy entrance examination



**ART STUDIOS IN THE ORCHARDS**

Abandoned factories, owned by the village, rented out to artists and craftspeople.



**ART STUDIOS IN THE VILLAGE**

Villagers now include art studios and shops to be rented as they upgrade their village houses



**GUANGZHOU LIVE INTERNATIONAL ACTION ART FESTIVAL**

An international contemporary performance art festival that includes provocative work from Chinese and Foreign artists, headquartered in the YouYou Art Center.



**WORKSHOPS IN THE VILLAGE**

Apartments, shops and entire houses, owned by villagers rented to artisans.



**SABAKI ART SPACE**

A tiny (5<sup>2</sup> meters) store-front window serving as an independent exhibition space, named after a chess strategy. Open to anyone, Chinese or foreign, to show their art



**HUAYUAN RESIDENCES (GUANGDONG PAINTING INSTITUTE)**  
Individual villas built on village-donated land for high-level state supported artists in a gated neighborhood



**ZHOU SHUJIAN MUSEUM**  
founded by a district official who is also a well known Calligraphy artist



**ART GALLERIES UNDER THE FREEWAY**  
Three complexes of art galleries and artist studio spaces built under the freeway with government support



**YOUYOU ART SPACE**  
Independent exhibition space, café, and store inside the village's former communist-era public meeting hall



**LIDONG WEI STUDIO**  
Spacious studio and gallery located in a luxury high rise near the village



**CAO CHONG'EN SCULPTURE GARDEN**  
Garden displaying works of socialist-realist sculpture by Cao Chong'en and others. Independently funded



**Christine Falk**  
*The Future Xiaozhou Village*  
Installation view  
March 2014

Sabaki space diorama  
75" x 60" x 31"



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## Sabaki Space

Founded by Liu Ke and Zhao Qinshan in 2008, Sabaki Space is a 5m<sup>2</sup> room with picture windows on two sides. Its name refers to a strategy in the game of Go that means to take a space and produce a chain reaction in a difficult situation. Its founders intended it to be an independent and experimental art space, open to anyone who wants to exhibit. The gallery has hosted numerous Chinese and foreign artists. The Art+Village+City studio hopes to show their work there in 2016.



**Sabaki Space  
Landlady**

"Yes, you can exhibit here. There are lots of foreign artists that do exhibitions here but don't do the naked things anymore!! Here we cannot accommodate nudity!!"



Made in Xiaozhou diorama  
75" x 60" x 31"

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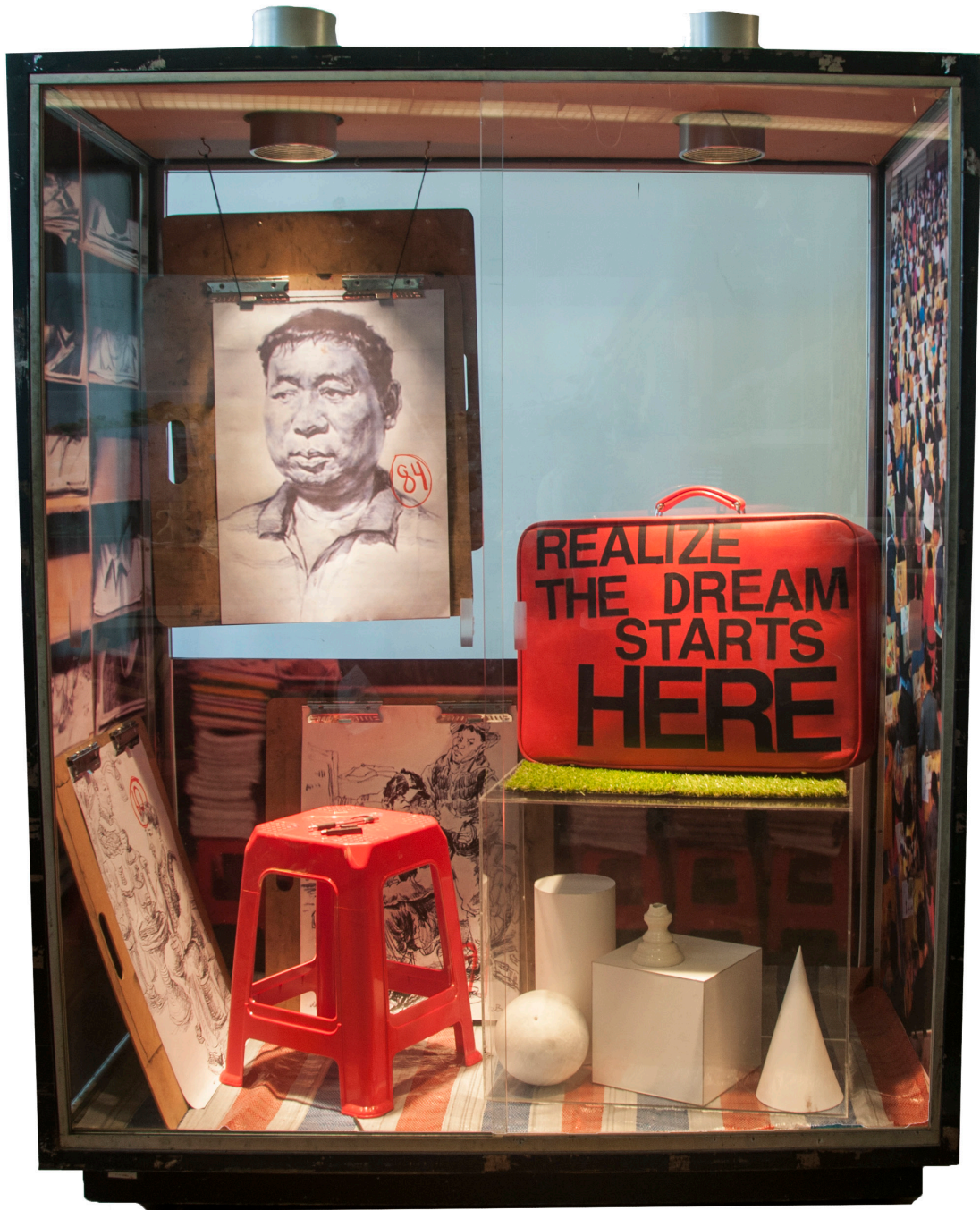
## Made in Xiaozhou

Guangzhou Art Academy, in addition to fine arts, teaches fashion design, ceramics, furniture design and photography. Graduates from these programs occupy studios, workshops and shops in the village, where they make and sell their handcrafted and artisanal products. Some focus on developing their crafts, others use their products to support less commercial forms of art. Xiaozhou's bohemian shopping district, unique in Guangzhou, now also offers many non-local crafts. Its recognizable aesthetic consists of exposed bricks, natural wood and handwritten calligraphy.



**4th year student in fashion design at  
Guangzhou Art Academy**

"We rent two studios in the village to use as 'playful' spaces in which we experiment but do not expect to sell anything. We sell most of our products on WeChat. We make leather goods but are also interested in fashion design. We just took our clothing to the Shenzhen Fashion Fair."



Xiaozhou Art Camps diorama  
75" x 60" x 31"

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# Xiaozhou Art Camps

In order to enroll in one of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts's 28 majors, a Chinese high school student must take a General Art Exam (*liankao*). Designed to test their foundational art skills, the exam consists of three parts: a three-hour portrait drawn from a photograph, a 30 minute composition drawn from memory, and a three-hour still-life painting. A jury scores each drawing or painting out of a possible 100 marks. Only students with the highest scores are admitted. In 2015, 42,000 students took the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts' entrance exam but only 1,335 students were accepted, an admission rate of 3%.

Starting in 2004, private "art camps" began appearing in Xiaozhou village, designed to give high school students extra training and preparatory practice for the art examinations. An estimated 50 to 60 art camps of various sizes exist in Xiaozhou, with the largest taking nearly 1000 students. The art camps run in the summer through fall and a short section in spring, and cost between 2000-5000RMB per month, including room and board. High school students, many from rural communities with little opportunity to study art, come from all over Guangdong province to train in Xiaozhou.



## Slogans from Advertisements for Art Camps in Xiaozhou:

"You will no longer be left behind.  
You will no longer be alone."

"Technique+Method=Ability  
Ability+Diligence=Efficiency  
Efficiency+Time=Success"





## Mirrored Gardens

Mirrored Gardens, designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto, is a white cube art gallery in buildings inspired by nearby village forms. The galleries, along with a kitchen, library and offices, are part of Mirrored Gardens. Founded in 2002 by curator Zhang Wei and writer Hu Fang, Vitamin Creative Space has art spaces in multiple cities, functioning both as a commercial gallery and a not-for-profit organization. In their Guangzhou and





Beijing locations, they represent foreign and Chinese experimental artists such as Cao Fei and Xu Tan. Part of Mirrored Gardens' concept is to link art and agriculture by creating a temporal and changing space "between architecture and landscape." Adjacent to the galleries, the founders and their employees are developing a garden/research project highlighting permaculture, a set of agricultural principles based on natural ecologies.





Stills from video © SHIMURAbros, works by Olafur Eliasson



**Hu Fang**

Vitamin Creative Space Founding Member

“For us, probably both [our space in the city and in the farmland] are very interesting suggestions of how art spaces could locate themselves in situations so that you could constantly have lived experiences. But here of course it looks quiet. But I think this is partially because we are not very familiar with this, because we are de-familiarized.”

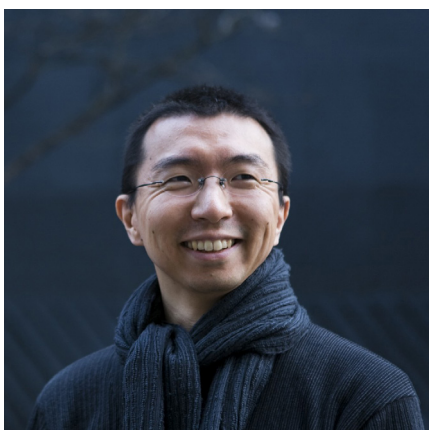
“Art no longer operates in a laboratory of artists, but as intuitive and active participation in the possibility of life ... Such creativity shall and will continuously raise questions with regard to social life and stimulate our consciousness of life in general, as well as our actions.” – from e-flux journal 11



**Boxco**

Employee at Mirrored Gardens

“I do some farming, work in the kitchen and the shop ... We research villages and read permaculture texts to find the relationship between the farm, the kitchen, and the body [...] My parents are business people in Guangzhou, its hard to explain to them what I’m doing here.”



**Sou Fujimoto**

Architect of Mirrored Gardens

“Inspired by the natural and traditional character of the surrounding villages, the project seeks to merge in its environment. In order to minimize the impact of the building on the site, the program is broken down into several small buildings that create a village like ensemble. The use of local materials, as well as the reuse of materials from the existing warehouse (like old roof tiles and Qing grey bricks), contribute to integrate the project in the site...The main questions driving this project are: How can art and agriculture complement each other? Can we create a project between landscape and architecture? How can the project fit naturally in this rural context?”



Work by Olafur Eliasson in Dongxizhuang Village



House in Dongxizhuang Village



Village House  
floor plan



Mirrored Gardens  
floor plan

I've been to the Mirrored Garden. It is beautiful. Earlier this year I went there to find a job as a cleaner. The environment is great, but people cannot speak loudly there. **Everyone is speaking without tones** (laughing). The environment is so nice that you will live longer!"  
**Villager from Dongxizhuang Village**



Mirrored Gardens is set among lush green fields, in an equestrian center that is part of the agricultural conservation area of Guangzhou's Panyu district. It is conceptually and practically connected to the nearby village of Dongxizhuang. The design of the buildings, product of a three year long collaboration between Fujimoto and Hu, mirrors village vernacular architecture. Vitamin Creative Space rents a traditional house in the village where staff, visiting artists and clients go for meals. They also employ village farmers to help them in their agricultural enterprises. The project exemplifies the growing engagement with rural and village life by contemporary Chinese artists.

**Huan**

Farmer, neighbor, villager, Mirrored Gardens landlord

"I don't like to use fruit peels to make fertilizer [like at Mirrored Gardens]. My farming method is different. I want a higher yield, I want it to grow fast because I need to sell. Hu Fang isn't like this. He grows vegetables for his own consumption. He doesn't care even if there is no harvest for a few months."









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## Conclusion

In 1978 at the outset of the Reform era, there were no contemporary Chinese artists known to the world. Today, Chinese artists are featured in every major international art exhibition, and several famous Chinese artists are household names in the art world. The rise of contemporary art in China is thus one of the most visible results of China's spectacular economic growth and political reform since the end of the Maoist era.

In the Pearl River Delta region, the willingness of local officials and village leaders to experiment with urban culture has created new and unexpected spaces for nurturing many kinds of art production. As a result, in the villages of the PRD people across all social strata, including migrant workers, urban professionals, art students, recent graduates, and retirees, are able to engage in art. Together they have generated a wide range of definitions and forms of art, that has reinvented both themselves and the cities they live in. The many art villages in the Pearl River Delta are thus one of the most dynamic cultural phenomena in China, expanding and impacting the possibilities of both urbanization and artistic expression.

One of the most urgent social issues in China today is the status of rural-to-urban migrant workers. Due to their lack of correct urban status in the cities that they inhabit, they experience much social discrimination, and lack many educational opportunities and access to public services. In the cities of the Pearl River Delta, migrant workers tend to live in the urbanized villages, where former villagers who were once farmers have become landlords and developers. While these village committees are the incubators of many political experiments and reforms, city-level officials in the PRD can also often be very progressive when it comes to cultural and economic policy as they attempt to transform the villages that make up their cities. This makes the urban villages of the PRD one of the most dynamic sites of political, economic and cultural contestation in contemporary China. Through each groups' embrace of art and creative industry, migrant workers have finally found an opening and a voice. The art villages of the PRD are hence the one place in China where they can participate in the vast transformation of China's cities.

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SHENZHEN

HONG KONG

HOU

15h  
landscape

Suzan  
Dress

National  
Park

3h

presentation

what of this place  
are you trying to

combination  
of technologies  
for representation  
ANALYSIS  
what arguments  
are you making

The commercial  
art work of  
Guangzhou

physical  
mobility  
in the space

new  
projects

The spatial  
&  
narrative

is there a  
need for an  
international  
guest  
critic  
for local  
market

The relation  
between  
market/state and individual

Guangzhou

sell  
smaller  
pieces of art  
formats

Chairs

Margaret

event  
critic

critic

my friend  
guest  
with  
Hu  
for  
critic

button

SBer

no  
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