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Paradise\Illusion - Ceramic Sculpture by Liu Jianhua and paintings by Peng Wei

October 17th - November 8th, 2003

Plum Blossoms Gallery is pleased to present *'Paradise\Illusion'* an exhibition of sculpture by Liu Jianhua and paintings by Peng Wei. *'Paradise\Illusion'* is a journey into the heart of post-political modern China. Liu Jianhua and Peng Wei use traditional media of porcelain sculpture and ink and color brush painting to express their take on how the development of modernism and consumerism has changed, and continues to change the Chinese culture. Both artists look to China's past in their subject matter, showing contrast with the current excesses and spiritual decay of today's society. *'Paradise\Illusion'* marks the first two-person exhibition in New York for both Liu Jianhua and Peng Wei.

Liu Jianhua is one of the most influential sculptors involved in the modern art scene in China today. His work has been exhibited around the world with solo shows in Hong Kong, Taipei, and Shanghai. His work is currently being shown at the Centre Pompidou "Alors La China 2003" (*What about China 2003*) group show and recently in the China Pavilion, 50th Venice Biennale at the Guangzhou Museum of Art.

Liu Jianhua uses bright colors and realistic detail to create his female figures. The women are in various playful and erotic poses served up on traditional blue and white porcelain dishes. The headless and armless figures are at once both haunting and titillating, objects of desire with no face or arms with which to express themselves. The loss of identity is an expression of modern China. Liu Jianhua masters the use of the mundane and everyday - dishes, clothes, female bodies - to reflect the loss of self and the change in the position of women in a post-political materialistic Chinese society. *"In the visual experience, the symbolic value of the objects of daily life evokes many associations and fantasies. This is my main reason for using Sun Yat-Sen Jackets, cheongsam, couches, bathtubs and women in various combinations."* -Liu Jianhua

Peng Wei's traditional Chinese paintings of shoes and court costume display the sharp contrast between old and new. Her paintings are delicate and beautiful in the tradition of Chinese watercolors, but the subject matter is starkly different. Peng Wei is on a search for the cultural myth in modern Chinese society. Materialism and consumerism wash away the missing links of cultural identity. Dress has always been a part of that identity. During the Cultural Revolution women's position in society was more secure. Chairman Mao proclaimed: "Women hold up half the sky." As capitalism forces many women to wear Western style high-heeled shoes and earn a living as an

object of desire, their position in society is no longer protected by cultural norms or a political system.

Born in 1962 in Ji'an, Jiangxi province, Liu Jianhua started working in the ceramic factories in Jingdezhen as a teenager and later studied at the Fine Arts Department of the Jingdezhen Pottery and Porcelain College from 1985-1989. He is currently an associate professor of Fine Arts at the Yunnan Arts Institute in Kunming. Liu Jianhua's work has been exhibited in Australia, France, and England with solo exhibitions in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Born in 1974 in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, Peng Wei graduated from Nankai University with a BA in art in 1997 and later earned a MA in philosophy in 2000. Peng Wei is currently an editor for "Art Magazine Now" in China. Her recent works have been shown in Beijing and Guangzhou.

Jingdezhen, the site of the Imperial kilns which date from as early as the 14th century, have continuously produced the infamous blue and white porcelain sought by collectors throughout the world. As a teenager, Liu Jianhua began his training in ceramic techniques and later sculpture as an apprentice in Jingdezhen. He employs all the knowledge and technology that Jingdezhen has to offer to create sculptures that are modern in their message yet filled with the beauty and detail of traditional porcelain.