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Jiang Shuo & Wu Shaoxiang- The New Age Cadres

11 –25 February, 2006 (Opening Reception: February 10, 2006, 6:00 – 8:30pm)

Continuing the huge success of the New York show, Plum Blossoms Gallery is pleased to bring the joint exhibition of the new works of Wu Shaoxiang and Jiang Shuo to Hong Kong in February 2006. Husband and wife, Wu Shaoxiang and Jiang Shuo are both reflect on their experiences growing up in Maoist China using poignant, critical humor.

Through his new works, Wu Shaoxiang addresses the cult of Mao, morphing Mao Zedong's visage into bronze casts of the familiar rotund Happy Buddha figure that is regarded as a symbol of good fortune in China. Mao, once the terrible, magnificent patriarch leader, takes on a new sublimity as the forebear of his nation's contemporary economic success. With a jug of wine and a rosary in each hand, Mao laughs all the way to the bank, while neck-ties – paraphernalia of global corporate culture – adorn his naked, bulging torso with the branded iconography that now carries so much currency amongst China's nouveau elite: Louis Vuitton monographs; dollar signs; and Playboy bunnies. Additional abstracted Mao figurines welded together from international coinage emphasize Mao's totemic status. Primal and phallic, yet smooth and otherworldly, they could easily be artifacts invoking the Great Leader's glossy legacy.

Once a Red Guard herself, Jiang Shuo also uses abstracted human form to address the fallout from the Cultural Revolution. Her bronze figurines, done in the lost-wax bronze casting method, depict Red Guards at play and in various states of ecstasy. Jiang Shuo reveals the complex emotional and psychological structure that upheld what is now regarded as one of the most horrific episodes of recent human history. Fully expressive of the youthful idealism that drove so many students to take on Chairman Mao's revolutionary invective, these sculptures are underpinned by subtle sexual tension and a wry aura of inevitable, life-changing trauma and violence – the idyll gone wild. For Jiang Shuo, the great irony is that the Red Guard generation now constitutes the group of leaders, businessmen, and entrepreneurs forging China's economic liberalization, a point aptly illustrated by one figure of a young girl cadre straddling a giant Coke bottle: still couched in totalitarian ideology, China has launched into uncharted territory, embracing the capitalism she once so opposed.

Wu Shaoxiang was born in Jiangxi Province, China, in 1957. From 1969 to 1978 he was “sent down” to the countryside where he worked as a farmer, brick-layer, and rafter. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution, Wu went to study sculpture at the Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute and later did postgraduate studies at the Central Academy of Arts and Design in Beijing. A leading sculptor in China's New Wave art movement, Wu lectured at the Central Academy of Arts & Design and was named one of China's ten most influential avant-garde artists. Jiang Shuo was

born in Beijing, China, in 1958. A Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, she studied at the Central Academy of Arts & Design and lectured there after finishing postgraduate studies. The couple left China and established a studio in Austria, where they emigrated to after escaping the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989.