VANCOUVER SCULPTURE PERFORMANCE NEW MEDIA BIENNALE

Vancouver Biennale Comments on Miss Mao

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Vancouver, Canada The Vancouver Biennale responds to the recent public debate regarding the sculpture, Miss Mao Trying to Poise Herself Atop Lenins Head.

The Vancouver Biennale would like to take this opportunity to respond to all those who have engaged in the dialogue regarding the Miss Mao sculpture, which was recently installed in Richmond BC as part of the 2009-2011 exhibition. We have closely followed the public debate that is happening in the media and have enjoyed seeing the full spectrum of opinions. The one thing that is common to all is the fact that the sculpture has us talking about two incredibly important figures in world history, their political regimes and the legacies that continue to this day, all within our democratic society that allows for this kind of diversity and freedom in public expression. If we can agree that knowing this history is important, we suggest that the sculpture that sparked this discussion has fulfilled its intent. We need only ask ourselves if we would be discussing Lenin and Mao around the office water cooler this week had it not been for this sculpture.

Far from celebrating the political figures, the sculpture, by internationally renown Chinese artists Gao Zhen and Gao Qiang, uses satire in its depiction of a diminutive and feminized Mao acting as a trapeze artist trying to balance herself on top of Lenins giant head. Those who suggest that this memorializes the men ought to take another look. In a statement the Gao Brothers provided to the Vancouver Biennale, they explain, "The communist system broke up in Russia in 1991, but in China, Miss Mao, the mutation of the Russian communist system, is still trying to keep balance in the communist nightmare. We hope our artwork could let people remember the history and actuality of Communism and that the piece will let people recall the great human misery and suffering the Communism caused".

The Gao Brothers, whose father was killed during the Cultural Revolution, often critically portray Mao and Communist figures in their art. As a result, they have long been subject to raids by government authorities on their Beijing studio and continue to hold underground exhibitions because their more critical artistic depictions remain banned in China.

We continue to stand behind our decision to include this sculpture in the Vancouver Biennale. Our overall objective is to create an outdoor museum that includes some of the most exciting rising stars and established international artists that are on the forefront in their medium and artistic expression. Works by the Gao Brothers have been exhibited internationally and are held in private and museum collections throughout the world. Their participation in the Vancouver Biennale provides residents and visitors a rare opportunity to experience one of their grand scale, controversial sculptures first hand and it helps establish Vancouver and neighbouring Richmond as a world-class cultural destination where public art is allowed to go beyond pretty and where images aren't politically controlled.

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For more information, please visit:

The Vancouver Biennale at <a href="https://www.vancouverbiennale.com">www.vancouverbiennale.com</a> Gao Brothers at <a href="https://www.gaobrothers.net">www.gaobrothers.net</a>.

## ABOUT THE VANCOUVER BIENNALE

The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit organization that mounts bi-annual public art exhibitions, bringing sculptures, new media and performance works by celebrated and emerging international artists to Vancouver and surrounding area parks, beaches and urban plazas. In doing so, the Biennale creates an open-air museum that merges the natural beauty of our landscape and our love of outdoor recreation with a world-class cultural experience, all contributing to our designation as one of the most livable cities in the world.

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