

TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

THE FIRST EMPEROR & HIS LEGACY

*Southeast Asia's first exhibition of genuine Terracotta Warriors
opens at the Asian Civilisations Museum*

22 June 2011, SINGAPORE – For the first time in Southeast Asia, the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) presents the stunning terracotta warriors from the tomb of China's First Emperor, called Shi Huangdi. The special exhibition, ***Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor and His Legacy***, on display from **24 June to 16 October 2011**, features one hundred works of art from Shaanxi province, China. **Guest-of-Honour, Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts & the Environment and Water Resources**, will open the exhibition on **Thursday evening, 23 June 2011**.

The discovery in 1974 of a terracotta army, consisting of thousands of life-size and realistic soldiers buried near Xi'an, is perhaps the most astonishing archaeological revelation of our time. Besides the overwhelming number of figures and their highly detailed artistry, the objects were of significant historical importance. They were from the tomb complex of one of the most controversial figures in history, the First Emperor who unified China in 221 BCE, and was noted for his cruelty and corruption as much as for his reforms of feudal China.

Ten figures made of terracotta (low-fired clay) will be on display in Singapore. These magnificent works of art bearing individual features of expression, hairstyle, and armour are true wonders. Scholars still debate their exact purpose and symbolism. The terracotta figures in the exhibition at the ACM include a general, two archers, infantrymen, a cavalry officer, a charioteer, a strongman and a horse.

"The terracotta warriors are an ideal combination of art and history. They were commissioned by the First Emperor, who united China and developed a centralised state, but he was also described as an evil ruler who burned books and executed Confucian scholars. At the same time, the warriors are compelling works of art – magnificent sculptures of individual detailing and great believability," said Dr Alan Chong, director of the ACM. "Moreover, the mystery of the warriors will hold visitors in awe. Although there are good theories about what these tomb figures mean, we are not completely certain why they were made. Indeed, we are still trying to unravel the secrets of the First Emperor's tomb."

In addition to the terracotta warriors, other objects from the First Emperor's tomb complex are displayed in the exhibition. An acrobat, a limestone suit of armour, real weapons and a bronze bird are shown. All are part of the re-creation of the emperor's court for his use in the afterlife. Made over two thousand years ago, the objects demonstrate the impressive detail and artistry of ancient Chinese art.

This exhibition sets the First Emperor's terracotta warriors in a wider context, by examining the period that led to the creation of a unified China as well as the legacy of his tomb on the later Han dynasty. Jade, bronze, and gold objects from the Qin state before the reign of the First Emperor provide a context for the warriors, and reveal historical forces that supported the unification of China.

The exhibition also includes beautiful terracotta figures from later imperial tombs of the Han dynasty. These are much smaller than the First Emperor's warriors, but no less interesting for their charm and softer forms. Some of these figures have a touching intimacy that is quite different from the militarism of the Qin dynasty objects.

Until the discovery of the terracotta warriors, little was known about the First Emperor except for later historical records. He was usually described as a cruel ruler and his government depicted as corrupt. Little was also known about the art of the Qin dynasty. The discovery of the terracotta warriors has shown that his court created objects of great beauty and sophistication.

Accompanying exhibitions

This is the first time that the ACM has conceptually expanded its presentation to include two accompanying exhibitions. The first is *Life After Death*, an installation by Singaporean artist Justin Lee, placed at the entrance to the museum's galleries. Justin has created his own version of the terracotta army, accompanied by fairy-like maidens with a decidedly contemporary slant. This work blends Western pop art with traditional Eastern imagery, giving rise to a new reading of a work that is a mix of many cultures, and thus quite Singaporean. Although the terracotta warriors are tomb figures, Justin's playful use of colour and light suggests that life after death might not be so bad after all.

A second show examines Han dynasty tomb objects using objects from the ACM's own collection. Presented in the Shaw Foundation Foyer, *Providing for the Afterlife: Han Funerary Art*, expands the theme of Chinese burial customs.

Exhibition catalogue

This catalogue, aimed at general readers, contains new essays that offer fresh perspectives on the meaning behind the terracotta army, their iconic status in Chinese history, and the First Emperor's architectural legacy on imperial tombs. Readers are encouraged to form their own interpretations of these various aspects of the terracotta army. The fully illustrated book is available at the museum shop and at major bookstores.

Programme and merchandise highlights

A series of themed activities has been planned for the exhibition. A conference will be held on 20 August, gathering together international scholars for a discussion of topics related to the culture of the Qin and Han dynasties. Special curator tours will be held throughout the exhibition. A *Terracotta Warriors Weekend Festival*, from 12 to 13 August 2011, will offer dance performances, roving acts and craft activities for families.

Specially designed memorabilia, ranging from exhibition postcards to Justin Lee-inspired notebooks, t-shirts, and tote bags will be available for purchase at a special museum shop.

The exhibition is generously sponsored by the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple.

This exhibition is organised by the Asian Civilisations Museum in partnership with the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Center, People's Republic of China.

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

Located by the historic Singapore River, the Asian Civilisations Museum traces the cultural roots of Singaporeans. It features a diverse collection from Southeast Asia, South Asia, China and West Asia. The first museum in the region with a focus on Asian cultures, the ACM also presents a programme of changing special exhibitions throughout the year.

About the exhibition

Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor and His Legacy

千秋帝业：兵马俑与秦文化

- Exhibition Dates : 24 June to 16 October 2011
- Venue : Special Exhibition Gallery, Asian Civilisations Museum
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555
- Website : www.acm.org.sg
- Enquiries : 6332 7798 / nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg
- Admission charges : \$8 (adults) / \$4 (concession)
Family package at \$20 for up to 5 pax
Free admission for children aged 6 and below
Free admission for students, teachers, full-time National Service men
and senior citizens aged 60 and above (Singaporeans and PRs only)
50% discount for students and senior citizens aged 60 and above
(non-Singaporean/PR)
50% discount every Friday, 7-9pm
- Opening hours : Monday: 1pm-7pm, Tuesday to Saturday: 9am – 7pm (to 9pm on Fri)
- How to get there : By MRT – Raffles Place, By Bus – 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167

For more media information, please contact

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