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**MUSEUM OFFICIALS REACH AGREEMENT ON HISTORIC
U.S. TOUR OF ‘TERRA COTTA WARRIORS: GUARDIANS OF
CHINA’S FIRST EMPEROR’**

Bowers Museum in California; The Houston Museum of Natural Science in Texas; and National Geographic Museum, Washington, D.C., to host historic exhibition tour of archaeological treasures from 2008 to 2010

(SANTA ANA, Calif. — August 10, 2007) As China begins its one-year countdown to the summer Olympic Games in Beijing, a delegation of museum officials representing the Bowers Museum in California, The Houston Museum of Natural Science in Texas and the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C., have reached agreement with Chinese officials in Xi’an for an historic U.S. tour of the famed Chinese Terra Cotta Warriors beginning in May 2008.

These warriors represent one of the greatest archaeological treasures in the world today. The exhibit will feature Emperor Qin Shi Huang, China’s first emperor; his tomb and surrounding sites; the discovery of the site by well diggers in 1974 and many exciting new finds, as well as the largest collection of the famed figures to ever leave China.

The exhibition of 120 sets of objects will include 20 complete life-sized terra cotta figures and will feature new discoveries of court officials, acrobats and generals. Equally exciting and probably most dramatic are the inclusion of two recently discovered, half-sized bronze chariots and life-sized bronze animals that were found in what would have been gardens within the tomb complex belonging to Qin Shi Huang (259 – 210 B.C.).

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Emperor Qin is one of the most important emperors in history and has been credited with unifying several separate warring states into a unified China in 221 B.C., creating the foundation of the China that we know today. He is also well known for initiating construction of the 30-foot-high, 3,000-mile-long Great Wall of China to protect his empire from invaders from the north. It is thought that his tomb, in addition to being heavily guarded by thousands of Terra Cotta Warriors, replicated an underground city that included a bronze tomb with 500 tons of mercury flowing as rivers and a jeweled ceiling representing the heavens. The tomb itself remains unexplored today.

“The upcoming United States tour of the first emperor’s Terra Cotta Army is of historic proportions,” says Bowers Museum President Peter Keller. “To put the importance of this exhibit in perspective, no previous exhibit from China has ever been allowed to include more than 20 ‘level one’ objects. We are bringing 52 ‘level one’ objects.”

A national panel of experts in China has established a rating system by which it grades art and antiquities on their importance to China. Those of the greatest importance are graded level one and are highly restricted as to the number that can be out of the country at any time.

“Since their discovery, the Terra Cotta Warriors have captured the world’s imagination because they give us a fascinating glimpse into the life of China’s first emperor, a man who created multiple historical marvels that endure to the present day,” says Joel A. Bartsch, president of The Houston Museum of Natural Science. “We’re eager to present the magnificent achievements of this ancient Chinese culture when this unprecedented exhibition comes to Houston.”

“National Geographic is pleased to host these national treasures of China that have captured the imagination of people around the world since their discovery in 1974. These magnificent objects from the tomb of Emperor Qin showcase the rich cultural legacy and Chinese contributions to the world,” says Terry Garcia, executive vice president for mission programs at the National Geographic Society. “We are pleased to offer the final chance to see this rare collection before it returns to China.”

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These objects were drawn from 11 different collections around Shaanxi Province, including the Museum of the First Emperor's Terracotta Army and Horses, the Shaanxi Provincial Institute for Archaeological Research, the Zhouzhi Museum, the Baoji Museum, the Xianyang Museum, the Lintong Museum, the Fengxiang Museum, the Chencang Museum, the Xi'an Institute for Archaeological Research and Protection, the Baoji Archeological Excavation Team and the Xianyang Institute for Archaeological Research.

"In 2008, while the world's attention is focused on modern China and the Summer Olympics in Beijing, this partnership will allow Americans to explore ancient China and the legacy of its first emperor, right here at home," adds Dr. Keller.

The collection will be seen this September at the world-famous British Museum and will close in April of 2008. The U.S. tour premieres at the Bowers Museum on May 18, 2008 where it can be seen through Oct. 12, 2008. The Houston Museum of Natural Science will host it from May 18 through Sept. 25, 2009, and the National Geographic Society Museum from Nov. 19, 2009, through March 31, 2010. The High Museum will present the same collection under a different title from November 2008 to April 2009.

Bowers Museum. Bowers Museum is a world-class, internationally-celebrated institution of art and culture dedicated to the preservation, study and exhibition of fine arts from around the globe. It is the largest and most revered museum in Orange County, California. Bowers has organized some of the most culturally significant exhibits in history, including "Secret World of Forbidden City," "The Dead Sea Scrolls" and now "Terra Cotta Warriors." Located minutes from Disneyland, it features eight spectacular permanent and special exhibits and has been voted Orange County's favorite museum for more than a decade.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science. The Houston Museum of Natural Science—one of the nation's most heavily attended museums—is a centerpiece of the Houston Museum District. With four floors of permanent exhibit halls, and the Wortham IMAX® Theatre, Cockrell Butterfly Center, Burke Baker Planetarium and George Observatory and as host to world-class and ever-changing touring exhibitions, the Museum has something to delight every age group. With such diverse and extraordinary offerings, a trip to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, located at One Hermann Circle Drive in the heart of the Museum District, is always an adventure.

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National Geographic Society Museum. The National Geographic Museum offers visitors the chance to experience compelling stories, stunning images and scientific research associated with the National Geographic Society. The museum presents changing exhibitions on a variety of cultural and natural history topics as well as permanent interactive and educational displays. The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet.

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