Terracotta Warriors kick off tour in Cincinnati

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China's famed Terracotta Warriors will open a four-month set in Cincinnati, Ohio on Friday, albeit under some tighter security.  
Terracotta Army: Legacy of the First Emperor of China will feature 10 life-sized Terracotta Warriors among 120 artifacts.  
The statues from Xi'an City in Northwest China will appear at the Cincinnati Art Museum for the first time, from April 20 to Aug 12.  
There will be stricter security to protect the exhibition following an incident at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia in December in which a Delaware man admitted to breaking off the thumb of one of the statues as a souvenir.  
"We have worked closely with Chinese cultural officials to assure the security of these artifacts. We also as an art museum have a very high standard for security and respect for objects on loan to the museum," said museum Director Cameron Kitchin.  
"After what happened in Philadelphia, the Cincinnati Art Museum and our staff have reached an agreement to take active actions in improving our security protocol and procedures to ensure the safety of our artifacts," said Qi Gaoquan, deputy director of the Bureau of Cultural Relics of Shaanxi province, who traveled to the museum for an inspection before the exhibition opens.  
"All the actions we took this time are based on the lessons we drew from the incident that happened in Philadelphia," Qi told China Daily. "We've taken the strictest security measures to ensure a similar incident will never happen again."  
Qi explained how Zhang Qiyue, consul general of China in New York, wrote in a letter to David Oh, a Philadelphia city councilman who had written an official city apology over the incident, that it will not affect cultural exchanges between China and the US.  
"The Cultural Relics Bureau of Shaanxi province will continue relics exchanges with the US to promote culture and people-to-people exchange," Qi said, adding that the bureau also will place higher requirements on technology and security measures when it loans relics overseas.  
The statues were part of the baked earth army sculpted by artisans for decades so that they could be buried with Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China (260-210 BC), and serve him in his afterlife.  
The site in Xi'an City where the statues were excavated along with clay chariots and horses has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and is now part of a museum.  
The items for the Cincinnati exhibit were carefully selected from 14 museums in Shaanxi province and basically cover every cultural feature of Qin people in different periods, Qi said.  
"I hope through the exhibition of the Terracotta Warriors people around the Cincinnati area will have a greater understanding of Chinese culture and history," said Zhang.  
"The significance of the project is really beyond culture and education; it really serves to enhance the mutual understanding between our two peoples and really serves to promote the relationship between the US and China."  
Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley said that "the more we can exchange ideas, culture and history, the better off the world will be. And the history of China is far longer than the history of the US. I believe by studying the past, we may create a better future."  
He said that "sharing the amazing historical artifacts from China here in Cincinnati gives us opportunities for our citizens to have exposure to a much longer history and enhance their understanding of China".  
Pam Meyers, a guest at the preview, said she was "overwhelmed when I first saw the Terracotta Warriors", calling them "something very different and very beautiful".  
"In today's world, you can look up tons of pictures on Google, but it's not the same as being in the presence of it, and I'm thrilled that people in Cincinnati have this great opportunity to see these great artworks in person," she said.  
"This is an exhibition that's about art, and about history, but it's also about diplomacy and humanity," said Kitchin, the museum director.

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