

Terracotta warriors to go on US tour

The British Museum show will travel to another four venues

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The exhibition of terracotta warriors from the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, at Xi'an, which opens at the British Museum on 13 September (until 6 April 2008) will then travel to four venues in the US. This will earn the Chinese province of Shaanxi \$100,000 per month from each of the four participating US institutions.

The US venues are the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art in Santa Ana, California (18 May-12 October 2008), the High Museum in Atlanta (15 November 2008-26 April 2009), Houston Museum of Natural Science (18 May-25 September 2009), and the National Geographic Society Museum in Washington, DC (19 November 2009-31 March 2010). Each institution negotiated with the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Centre separately after the British Museum had assembled the checklist for the London show.

Michael Shapiro, director of the High Museum, submitted his own proposal for a terracotta warriors show to Shaanxi last October. When he returned to Xi'an in January the Chinese suggested he consider the British Museum checklist for Atlanta and Mr Shapiro agreed.

Bowers president Peter Keller, who has brought several Chinese shows to the museum, was already engaged in discussions for a terracotta warriors exhibition to coincide with the 2008 Olympics. Earlier this year the Chinese suggested he also present the same works slated for London. (The Bowers

and the British Museum have a joint-venture agreement to share loans and exhibitions.)

Mr Keller signed the Bowers onto the tour and the Chinese then asked him to help add another two American venues. The Phoenix Art Museum, the Indianapolis Children's Museum, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Bass Museum in Miami, among others, were interested in the show, he says. But institutional relations prevailed and he selected the Houston Museum of Natural Science and the National Geographic Society Museum in Washington, DC, each of which has collaborated with the Bowers. Officials from the Bowers, the High, and Houston signed individual agreements with Shaanxi this spring, and Susan Norton, director of the National Geographic museum, has since signed a memo of understanding to bring the show to Washington, DC.

As we went to press, the British Museum had already sold 58,000 tickets for the show, breaking the record for advance bookings in the UK.

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