

Wanxin Zhang

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My sculptures are inspired from the Qin Dynasty's Terra-cotta warriors. In the third century BC, Shi Huang Di (246 – 210 BC), the first Chinese emperor, ordered the building of the Army underneath Xian, to maintain his dignity and to protect him in the next life. Today, two thousand years later, as an artist, I am digging out new Terra-cotta warriors from my mind. I am not recreating these warriors as a comparison to the original army with its style, form, or sense of magnificence; instead, I am rebuilding them with the artistic language of soulfulness, spirituality, and personality. To put it concisely, I am giving the warriors new lives.

Many years ago, when I was standing in front of the Qin warriors at the museum in Xian, I was truly shocked by the large scope of the scene. From then on, I have always asked myself, "Who were they? Why are they standing here?" Even though the Qin warriors have thousands of gestures and hundreds of poses, they all have the same occupation, and that is to guard the emperor in his burial compound. Furthermore, not only did these warriors become burial accompaniments, the thousands of conscripts who spent years completing the tomb also became forever enclosed in the mausoleum. When the first pit of Terra-cotta warriors was discovered in 1974, followed subsequently by the excavation of the next three pits, these compounds immediately became important archaeological finds in Chinese history. But to me, from the perspective of an artist, these discoveries represent evidence of a feudal political tragedy.

To revitalize the warriors has always been my art dream. I exercise my artistic authority to use a romantic imagination and compassionate conception to express a new genre of warriors. Along with this resurrection, my warriors have in them the essences of you, me, and everyone. They are poets, doctors, fathers, and heroes living among us. Stripped of their armors and weapons, they are holding flowers, skateboards, books, and children. They will also always have imprinted on them the marks of history. Each statue is filled with questions, confusion, deep thoughts, sense of

humor and contemporary concepts. And yet they are all individuals with their own characteristics. They are all keeping their own integrity and dignity.

I use the same materials and creation process as the conscripts who created the original Qin Terra-cotta army, but with the distinct differences in facial expressions, gestures, and physical attributes, I am depicting a new phenomenon. My art is about finding a dialogue within ourselves in history, politics, and the society.