

[LAI130875 Strib Features: A Revolution in Realism EDIT]

China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy

StarTribune NIE #2

Terracotta Warriors – Why So Realistic?

Study this soldier. What words can you use to describe him? What might his personality be like? What do the positions of his body, arms, and hands suggest about his role in the army?

The First Emperor's Terracotta Army includes more than 7,000 realistic warriors, no two alike. Like many others in ancient China, Qin Shihuang believed in a never-ending life after death. He wanted to be sure he had everything he needed in the next life.

When the emperor decided over 2,000 years ago to build his elaborate tomb, he ordered artists to create these fierce warriors to protect him. He also ordered other figures to entertain him in the next life. Each soldier made from terracotta stands about six feet tall and weighs over 600 pounds! Their shoes, bodies, and faces are different from one another. Though the color has been lost on most of the excavated soldiers, each was once fully painted in bright colors to emphasize its individuality.

Why was realism so important to Qin Shihuang? Some scholars speculate that each statue represents a known individual, but we cannot know if this is true. What we can *see* is that the realistic hairstyles, facial expressions, headgear, and shoes depict facts of the daily lives of the actual army.

The statues mark a critical moment in the history of Chinese art when expressiveness and individuality became important. The human figure rarely appeared in the art of Bronze-Age China, and certainly not realistically. When artists began to make small figure statues for tombs in the centuries leading up to the First Emperor's Qin dynasty, they added color and expressions to imbue the statues with liveliness. The innovations of the Qin warriors, however, set the stage for future Chinese art depicting realistic humans going about daily life.

Use the News Activity!

It was important to Qin Shihuang that his artists create realistic, detailed sculptures of warriors, entertainers, and animals. Search the StarTribune for an article or profile about an individual. What words does the writer use to describe the person? Does the writer tell what the person looks like? What he or she wears? What he or she has accomplished? On what aspects of the person does the writer focus attention? How? What details do you think the writer could have included to give you an even more realistic picture of the individual? Why might he or she choose to leave out these details?

Or

What is real? Think about techniques producers of reality television shows use to make us believe what we are watching is real. In newspapers, journalists—writers and photographers—use their own techniques to make readers believe the stories and images are real. Search the StarTribune to find words and images you think are particularly effective in conveying the believability of a story.



China, Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), *Armored Kneeling Archer*, terracotta, excavated from Pit 2, Qin Shihuang tomb complex, 1977. The images are produced with kind permission from the Qin Shihuang's Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum, ©Photograph by Xia Juxian and Guo Yan.