

## 《巴黎艺术家创作“女兵马俑”》

When Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, anticipated his death more than 2,000 years ago, he wanted an army of warriors to guard his mausoleum forever and protect him in the afterlife.

So he ordered the creation of some 8,000 terra-cotta soldiers, along with hundreds of terra-cotta horses and chariots, to be buried with him in his tomb. Historians speculate the soldiers were modeled after eight individuals.

When the statues were discovered by workers digging a well in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, in 1974, the world was stunned by the spectacular funerary art and the legacy of the powerful emperor. Since then, it's become a major tourist attraction and a World Heritage site.

Now, these soldiers have a counterpart: female terra-cotta warriors.

Prune Nourry, a Paris-born artist based in New York City, has created a small army of them. In "Terracotta Daughters," 116 are featured in an exhibition at the China Institute from September 10 through October 4. The show's US premiere is presented by the French Institute Alliance Francaise and China Institute as part of FIAF's Crossing the Line festival.

The difference is these female terra-cotta warriors are not out to protect any emperor, but were created to bring attention to the plight of girls in China.

"In China, there is a huge imbalance between boys and girls. I wanted to highlight the issue of gender preference," said Nourry. "I needed a strong cultural symbol to base this project on, and a universal one that would speak both to Chinese villagers in the countryside and to citizens abroad."

And, in a striking parallel to the terra-cotta soldiers, the terra-cotta girls will also become an archaeological project. After the exhibition, they will be buried in China until 2030, the year that, according to Chinese sociologists, men will have the hardest time finding a wife because of the skewed gender ratio.

The imbalance of the sexes is a serious problem for the Chinese. A 2010 census indicates there are at least 34 million more men than women. Due to the one-child policy and traditional preference for boys, as well as sex-selective technologies, China will have a huge surplus of men, which presents daunting demographic challenges for the world's most populous country.

Perhaps for those reasons, Nourry didn't encounter difficulties with the Chinese government in pursuing this project in China. She started working on the terra-cotta statues two years ago after finishing an installation in India that also explored gender bias.

In deciding on the size of the female army, Nourry chose the number eight because of its auspiciousness in Chinese culture. She created the first eight statues modeled after eight girls whom she met through an orphan



