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THE PALACE MUSEUM AND WORLD MONUMENTS FUND LAUNCH MAJOR JOINT RESTORATION PROJECT IN BEIJING'S FORBIDDEN CITY

OFFICIALS FROM THE PALACE MUSEUM AND WORLD MONUMENTS FUND SIGN AGREEMENT TO WORK TOGETHER ON MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR, 10-YEAR INITIATIVE TO CONSERVE QIANLONG GARDEN

SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP MADE POSSIBLE WITH LEAD FUNDING FROM THE FREEMAN FOUNDATION

For Immediate Release—Beijing, China, March 1, 2006 . . . **The Palace Museum** in Beijing and **the World Monuments Fund** announced today that the two organizations are expanding their unprecedented partnership of the past five years and will work together on a major new initiative in the Forbidden City—the restoration of the Qianlong Garden, one of the most historically significant and architecturally rich sites in the Forbidden City. This announcement marks the launch of a historic joint commitment by the PM and WMF: a 10-year, \$15-18 million project to conserve the Garden, which was built by Qing Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736–1795) and is one of the largest areas in the Forbidden City to remain relatively untouched since imperial times. The most comprehensive project ever undertaken by WMF, the new Palace Museum-World Monuments Fund initiative is also the most significant partnership ever taken on by the PM with an international organization to restore a historic site in the Forbidden City.

The full-scale commitment by the PM and WMF to the Qianlong Garden restoration over the next 10 years will bring together the best resources and expertise from around the world in a wide range of areas, including conservation, architecture, technical and craftsmanship training, and museum methodologies such as planning, education, site interpretation, and exhibition. The PM and WMF expect that their work at the Garden will serve as a learning laboratory for restoration, planning, and site interpretation in other areas of the Forbidden City, and perhaps other sites in China. In addition, the project will expand opportunities for international technical and cultural exchange among conservation and museum professionals in the U.S. and China. When the project is completed in 2016, visitors, who now have only limited access to some of the courtyards of the Garden complex, will be able to enjoy the historic interiors and the emperor's private garden, which have never been fully open to the public.

“Today is a memorable day for the Palace Museum and the World Monuments Fund,” said **Mr. Li Ji, Executive Deputy Director of the Palace Museum**. “The 230-year-old Qianlong Garden is a famed imperial garden complex that not only bears historical witness to the political and imperial life of Qing Emperor Qianlong and reflects the aesthetic and

cultural meaning sense of Chinese classical gardens, but also demonstrates the achievement of a unique landscape style that blends features of gardens in both northern and southern China. Today, all the elements necessary to conserving and protecting the entire Qianlong Garden are in place, and our signing ceremony demonstrates our commitment and expectation toward this very important restoration in the Forbidden City. All of you here today bear witness to this historic moment.”

“We are very excited that our collaboration with the Palace Museum has resulted in this joint announcement of such an extraordinary project,” noted **Bonnie Burnham, President of the World Monuments Fund**. “WMF began to work in the Forbidden City with the Palace Museum in 2001, on a restoration of the Lodge of Retirement. Our combined efforts there have quickly developed into forming one of WMF’s strongest and most important partnerships worldwide. With this new initiative, we are bringing together two key institutions from two major nations to focus on a significant commitment to cultural heritage that will benefit the world. We are very grateful for the exceptional generosity of the Freeman Foundation, which has enabled us to launch the Qianlong Master Plan, and to all our donors for their enthusiastic support. This is an exciting time for all of us.”

“We are very pleased to be here today, on the occasion of this exciting announcement,” said **Houghton Freeman, Chairman of the Freeman Foundation**. “A restored Qianlong Garden, newly accessible and interpreted, will help deepen the modern world’s understanding and appreciation of China’s artistic and cultural traditions, and we are honored to be a part of this important project.”

Donors

WMF’s participation in the Qianlong Master Plan is made possible by the generosity of a number of donors, led by the Freeman Foundation, with additional support from the Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, the Brown Foundation, the Starr Foundation, British American Tobacco (UK), The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kimmelman. Additional matching funds are being contributed by the Palace Museum.

The Qianlong Garden

Covering approximately two acres of the Ningshou Gong Precinct in the northeast quadrant of the Forbidden City, the Qianlong Garden was built from 1771 to 1776 by Emperor Qianlong, the fourth Emperor of the Qing Dynasty, to serve as his residence during his planned retirement. Known as much for his artistic interests as for his political leadership, Emperor Qianlong designed the Garden as a “mini” Forbidden City within the Forbidden City. The Garden’s opulent buildings in the complex preserve decoration and furnishings from a time widely considered to be the most sophisticated period of interior design in China’s history.

Qianlong’s reign coincided with a key moment in the history of China. Under his sovereignty, China was the world’s largest and richest nation, and was engaged in extensive interactions with the West. While the impact of Chinese art and architecture on Western European art of this period is well known, the Lodge of Retirement, and other interiors of the Garden, reveal that this influence was reciprocal. The large-scale *trompe l’oeil* paintings and wall coverings in a number of the Garden’s buildings were influenced by Giuseppe Castiglione, a Jesuit missionary and painter who settled in China ca. 1730. Four large *trompe l’oeil* silk murals, which incorporate Western motifs and methods, are the sole surviving examples of their genre not only in the Forbidden City but in all of China.

The emperor made use of the best available materials and artisans for his Garden buildings to create sumptuous and elegant spaces that represented the epitome of Chinese interiors at the time. Today, much of the most delicate decoration, including bamboo marquetry, white jade cartouches, and double-sided embroidered silk, is disintegrating. The rooms of the Garden buildings, including a unique theater pavilion in the Lodge of Retirement, have remained largely untouched since their creation, and have been seen by very few people since 1925, when many of the buildings were left unused. The exquisite attention to detail is also seen in the architectural features of the Garden: the layout of the buildings and gardens among the four courtyards, and the extensive and unusual use of rockery gardens, are all perfectly harmonized within the site.

The Garden has survived this long because of a remarkable imperial edict that Emperor Qianlong issued during his lifetime: this area of the Forbidden City would be preserved in future years as part of a palace for “super sovereigns,” i.e., emperors who retired. Were it not for that edict, it is likely that this complex would have been significantly altered by subsequent reigning sovereigns in the Forbidden City, as was a common practice. In more recent history, the Lodge and the other buildings in the Qianlong Garden—like the Forbidden City itself—survived the Cultural Revolution because of the protection afforded to it by Premier Chou En-lai during that period. For much of the 20th century, a lack of available financial resources protected the site from alteration—a form of benign neglect. The Qianlong Garden is now poised for restoration and presentation to the public who will be able to access the site on a scheduled basis.

Master Plan for the Qianlong Garden

In 2004, the PM and WMF made a comprehensive review of the entire Qianlong Garden site and developed a Master Plan, led by **Liu Chang, Associate Professor, School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Beijing, and WMF’s country representative in China.** Following the Master Plan, the restoration of the entire Qianlong Garden will be carried out in four distinct phases, all to be completed by 2016, with each phase focusing on one or two of the four courtyards.

The project will restore the architectural and physical integrity of the Garden, its buildings, interiors, garden rockeries and plantings, and at the same time rehabilitate and modernize its infrastructure: the Garden’s heating, drainage, and electricity. Most of the Garden’s buildings are structurally sound, but many of its elaborate interiors require extensive restoration.

The Master Plan guiding the project will ensure that the entire Qianlong Garden is accessible to the public for the first time as a unified, contiguous site through which visitors will be able to explore the restored buildings, their interiors, and gardens—an experience previously enjoyed only by China’s emperors. In addition, the project will create new educational and interpretative centers, providing opportunities for public education and interpretation of key aspects of China’s architectural and imperial history to ever-expanding audiences, both Chinese and international. Integral to the Master Plan will be the development of an interpretation plan to accommodate public access, taking into account the intimate scale of the site and the delicate nature of the site.

Qianlong’s Lodge of Retirement, located in the Garden’s fourth courtyard, will be the first building in the Garden to be restored. Restoration of the Lodge began in 2001, as part of a trial cooperative project between the Palace Museum and WMF, and is expected to be completed in time for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

The Palace Museum

The Palace Museum was established on October 10, 1925, on the foundation of a palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (the Forbidden City) and their collection of treasures. It is a large comprehensive national museum that embraces the palatial architectural complex, ancient art, and imperial court history. The Forbidden City was established in 1420. It was designated by the State Council as a key national cultural heritage protection site in 1961 and in 1987 it was named as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. The Forbidden City boasts the largest and most intact ancient palatial architectural complex in both China and the world. The Palace Museum is dedicated to the conservation of its ancient architecture, collections and ancient court history through archiving, research, and display so they may be enjoyed by people from all walks of life.

World Monuments Fund in China

The World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the foremost private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world. Since its founding in 1965, WMF has worked tirelessly to stem the loss of historic structures at more than 400 sites in over 80 countries. From its headquarters in New York City—and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid, and Lisbon—WMF works with local partners and communities to identify and save important heritage sites through innovative programs of project planning, fieldwork, advocacy, grant-making, education, and on-site training.

Since 1996, the World Monuments Fund has worked with the People's Republic of China and its citizens to raise worldwide visibility of and financial support for protection and restoration of internationally recognized Chinese cultural heritage sites. During this time, WMF has provided technical assistance and financial support to projects throughout China. WMF projects in China have included imperial sites, ancient temples, village theaters, and archaeological sites. (*See accompanying brochure on WMF sites in China.*)

The Freeman Foundation

The Freeman Foundation was established in 1994 through the bequest and in memory of the businessman and benefactor Mansfield Freeman, a co-founder of the international insurance and financial conglomerate American International Group, Inc., better known as AIG. This private and philanthropic foundation, based in Stowe, Vermont, with offices in New York City, is dedicated to augmenting international understanding between the United States and the nations of East Asia. It accomplishes this principally through the distribution of grants in the educational sector. The foundation, which makes grants to various organizations and institutions, is committed to increasing, strengthening, and popularizing the teaching of Asia in university classrooms. It has created the Undergraduate Asian Studies Funding Initiative to provide grants to numerous American colleges to strengthen and expand their Asian studies programs. The dual aims of the initiative are to increase access to Asian studies courses and to increase the number of students in the United States studying about Asia.