

Money Buys a Place in Eternity for the Living

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

November 17, 2011



Busts in the Muzeon park. This weekend is the last chance to see the remaining sculptures slated for removal. **Igor Tabakov**

In Russia, only the dead are honored by street memorials. But for some fame seekers, the wait was too long.

A veritable vanity fair of 36 busts depicting mostly mid level — and very-much alive — businessmen was "discovered" in a popular outdoor oasis in downtown Moscow this week.

It seems that the previous administration of the Museon arts park was perfectly willing to honor anyone who wanted to pay for the installation of a sculpture, the park's current director, Yelena Tyunyayeva, told The Moscow Times.

Because the busts were installed illegally, they will be removed by Tuesday, she said by telephone. That is, provided that they do not fall apart on their own, given that many are

made of cheap plastic instead of bronze.

Located on Krymskaya Naberezhnaya next to the Park Kultury metro station, Museon hosts about 700 sculptures, some of which date back to the Soviet era and others of a more recent vintage.

Monuments on display include Soviet literary figure Maxim Gorky, KGB founder Felix Dzerzhinsky and even Josef Stalin, whose memorial neighbors one honoring his victims.

But tucked into one alley, less familiar faces loom. Among them are, for example, Fizuli Atash-ogly Faradzhayev, head of a small metalworks company, and Igor Veselov, who produces composite materials.

Yet another bust depicted Vyachalav Kireyev — who owns a fishery in the Moscow region — dressed in a general's uniform.

Rossia One television [reported](#) on Wednesday that all the busts are complete with plaques identifying the men (no women were on display) as "prominent luminaries of the 20th and 21st centuries," though the plaques were taken down before The Moscow Times visited the alley on Thursday.

Tyunyayeva said the busts were discovered during an inventory ongoing in the park following the death of its former head, Mikhail Pukemo.

Pukemo, who died earlier this year, established Museon in 1992, initially as a place to store discarded Soviet sculptures, and turned it into a popular hangout.

Belgorod-based entrepreneur Boris Makhodin, one of the men briefly immortalized in the alley, told Rossia One that he paid 1.2 million rubles (\$38,000) for a sculpture of himself. Multiplied by 36, that means the park has raked in a hefty sum of 43.2 million rubles (\$1.4 million).

Composite materials tycoon Veselov told The Moscow Times by telephone on Thursday that the sculptures were "erected properly," but declined further comment. Calls to several others featured in the alley went unanswered throughout the day.

However, city legislator Alexander Krutov insisted that the busts violate federal laws, which explicitly prohibit erecting monuments to people before they die, Rossia One television reported.

Notes on the busts identified their creators as Pyotr Stronsky, head of the little-known International Academy of Culture and Arts, and Oleg Oleinik, co-head of the equally obscure Patrons of the Century charity, who was earlier reported to be issuing medals honoring businessmen in exchange for cash.

Oleinik was not available for comment Thursday. A man who answered a cell phone number listed on Stronsky's web site said he was not the sculptor and promptly hung up.

Thirty identical sculptures of angels by Stronsky dot cities nationwide, including Beslan, where a bloody terrorist attack took place in 2004. One of them stands in the Museon, whose

late director Pukemo was Stronsky's deputy at an academy where the sculptor is chair.

"Maybe some of them are good people, but their busts are built illegally," Museon new head Tyunyayeva said. She added that only some busts were made of bronze, while others of "cheaper materials."

Paint on the cheaper busts is peeling, and park guards said a couple were already brought down by strong wind, Vesti reported.

"This is an outrage, total hackwork made of some sort of plasticine. It's a disgrace for Moscow and must be destroyed," architect Alexei Klimenko, an adviser to City Hall, told the channel.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/17/money-buys-a-place-in-eternity-for-the-living-a10866>