

Tsereteli's 12th Sculpture Is Dedicated to Beslan Victims

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Visitors and supporters unveiling a monument dedicated to people killed in the Beslan terrorist attack.

Vladimir Filonov

A 5-meter-tall monument to people killed in the Beslan terrorist attack was unveiled Tuesday on Ulitsa Solyanka, and a city official said controversial sculptor Zurab Tsereteli had been selected for the job because his was the smaller of the two best proposals.

The sculpture depicts a group of children, some of them with angel wings, ascending to heaven and leaving toys and a bicycle below. It was unveiled Tuesday to commemorate International Children's Day.

A joint proposal by two architects from North Ossetia, where Beslan is located, was the initial favorite in a city tender for the monument, but it was discarded for being more "large-scale and more expensive to make," Igor Voskresensky, deputy head of City Hall's architecture committee, told The Moscow Times.

In approaching Tsereteli, “we took his temper into account and asked for the monument to be smaller, using the space available and taking into account the fact that a church is nearby,” Voskresensky said.

Ten proposals were presented for the open tender organized by the city, Interfax said. Tsereteli, a favorite of Mayor Yury Luzhkov who has 11 other sculptures dotting Moscow, declined to be paid for his work on the Beslan monument after being awarded the contract.

A large delegation from Beslan that attended the unveiling approved of Tsereteli's work. “We know his style, and this was the monument we wanted to see,” said Ella Kesayeva, head of the Beslan Mothers group. “It is very important to preserve the memory of the victims, and we are very grateful to both the city authorities and to the sculptor.”

Georgian-born Tsereteli, 76, is known for his passion for giant monuments, the most famous of which is the 94-meter-tall bronze sculpture of Peter the Great. The monument, erected on the shore of Moscow River in 1996, was widely panned by architects and media.

The Beslan attack in September 2004 resulted in 334 deaths, including those of 186 children.

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