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Bogus Busts Head Back to Obscurity

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Dozens of obscure busts placed for cash made a mockery of a park. **Igor Tabakov**

City authorities on Wednesday removed dozens of illegally erected busts depicting mostly midlevel — and still very much alive — businessmen from a popular outdoor sculpture park in downtown Moscow.

"The Muzeon [arts park] has turned into a Hollywood alley of fame for totally obscure, shadowy characters, moreover — considerable money was paid for the installation of the busts," said Sergei Kapkov, head of City Hall's culture department.

"We don't need this Vanity Fair and won't allow it," Kapkov said, according to Itar-Tass.

The 36 busts were temporarily placed at the park's storage facility, the agency reported.

The busts were erected in the past two years without the knowledge of the city authorities, in the park on Krymskaya Naberezhnaya next to the Park Kultury metro station, Itar-Tass said.

Federal law prohibits erecting monuments to people before they die.

Belgorod-based entrepreneur Boris Makhodin, one of the men briefly immortalized in the alley, told Rossia One last week 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).

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.

It was not immediately clear how the two creators and the park's former head, Mikhail Pukemo, who died earlier this year, shared the money.

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