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# A Russian Pensioner's Creative Recycling Project

## A playground built with scrap metal and junk.

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A playground that belies the town's "muddy" name. **Igor Pastukhov / MT**

At first there doesn't seem to be anything special about a children's playground in the town of Gryazi, Lipetsk region. The only difference is that it is more colorful and inventive than most, with miniature buildings, swings, a truck, ship, and what seems to be a working fireplace.

But it is unique: it was built by one man out of recycled scrap metal and junk — for free.

Sergei Borodin is a retired assistant train driver. He grew up in a large family, a younger child who liked to draw, make clay sculptures, and carve wooden figures. When he retired ten years ago, he began to create a playground.

The idea didn't come to him all at once. First, he just noticed a concrete block left by the

builders and asked his son to help put it flat so the local children could play on it. Then he decided to paint it, and before he knew it, it became the train from Romashkovo, a character in a Russian cartoon. Since the neighborhood boys and girls climbed around it for hours, Borodin decided to make something else, which is how the swings and benches appeared. And then the kids asked him to build a sandbox, since what's a playground without one? But instead of a typical sandbox, Borodin built a ship with the sandbox in back, so at the bow the children could pretend they were at sea, and in the stern they could pretend they were on a beach.

In good weather the park is always filled with children clambering in and out of the trucks, trains and little cottages, doing pull-ups, climbing up and down the ladders, or playing "school" and "house." Throughout the park are characters from Russian fairy tales and classic cartoons.

Everything is made from recycled materials: scrap metal, wooden boards, broken bricks, old boxes, tires, cast-offs and other recycled materials that can withstand any weather.

"I look for the rustiest metal. Paint peels off from them more easily," Borodin said.

Broken bricks in the garage became a fireplace, painted white and decorated. Old pieces of wood became a little cottage after months of work over the winter. Every year the playground grows as he creates something new.

Borodin's chidren's park has been named the best playground in Gryazi twice. He used the prize money to buy paint for the attractions and chocolate bars for the children.

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