

Pass It On®...

From Russia, With Love.

The incredible story of Russian sculptor Andrey and his mission to bring unity to Ukraine and Russia through art.

Andrey's Ukrainian mother encouraged him to follow his passion for art. His Russian father taught him to work hard. And his young wife encouraged him to find personal meaning in his sculptures.

Andrey and Katya met in art school in Moscow. Andrey is tall and broad-shouldered. When you talk to him, he bends in close to understand the meaning you are trying to convey. His brown eyes light up as if from within. He'll put a large hand on your shoulder as he apologizes for his broken English, sometimes explaining the definition of a Russian or Ukrainian word or using a word in French to punctuate a thought.

Strewn out on a table are the photographs of all his projects, many featured in prominent Russian publications. His sculptures are primarily civic pieces created to represent Russia's strength or her citizens' scientific accomplishments. One sculpture of Nikola Tesla shows the towering figure tenderly opening his hand to a small bird. Andrey explains that he wanted to show the intellectual strength of the man, but also his heart. It is this ability to capture the depth of humanity in one pose that makes Andrey's work so captivating.

Andrey and Katya were living a charmed artist's life. They were doing rewarding work, making a good living and raising two small children. Then, the war broke out, dividing families and casting a pall over the whole region that weighed heavily on the people. Travel became restricted, communication was spotty. Finances were hard to access. Andrey and Katya were traveling when the war began. There was little hope that their lives would ever be normal again because Andrey would be conscripted into the military. So, with what little money they had in their pockets, they took a train leaving Russia.

"It was a miracle that we got that train," Andrey remembers. "There were no seats. But while I was talking to the man behind the counter, two seats came up as available. We took them and held our children on our laps for 14 hours."

That was only the beginning of their journey as refugees. Eventually, they ended up in the Western United States. Andrey found work as a sculptor's apprentice and went to work welding the giant steel infrastructure to support clay sculptures that would become bronze. Massive horses, dignitaries and long friezes that would adorn university campuses and town squares were built and shipped from the studio.

At night, Andrey worked on his own sculpture, a gift to the world expressing the sadness and despair he felt for his family living in both Ukraine and Russia. The sculpture features two majestic mothers, clothed in the robes of peace, yet mourning. At their feet is a fallen soldier representing their son: a Russian mother and a Ukrainian mother both lamenting the same boy. Andrey has no words to describe the scene, not in his native tongue or the one he now uses every day in a new home. He only tears up.

Peace...PassItOn.com

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