Featured Felines: Cat Statues and Memorials 6: In Russia

(2020)

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These are numerous cat statues and sculptures in Russia; here are some.

I haven't been able to find the significance of this sculpture by S.B. Belyaev, which is installed in the large 'Greenwich' (Grinvich) shopping mall in **Ekaterinburg**. The cat is clearly anxious to get at whatever the cook is holding!

Another 'no information' image, this one of a cat sculpture in **Mytishchi**, a city in the Moscow region. It's described as 'angry cat'.

According to its creator, this monument in Baumann Street, **Kazan** is dedicated to the first cats from the city who went to St Petersburg to deal with the rodent problem at the Hermitage. Empress Catherine II noted when visiting that the city was rodent-free, and so ordered 30 Kazan cats to be sent to the Hermitage. They dealt with the problem in short order, and their successors are still there today. The statue specifically represents legendary mouser **Alabryz**, said to be the first of the Kazan cats to go.

Characters from Mikhail Bulgakov's classic satirical novel 'The Master and Margharita', which was banned in Soviet Russia, are sitting on a bench in a **Moscow** courtyard having a quiet conversation. The man Koroviev is regarding the cat **Behemoth** (or Bergemot in Russian); in the novel he is a huge cat who walks on two legs, likes vodka and chess, and can adopt human form.

Yoshkar-Ola is the capital city of the Mari El republic along the northern bank of the river Volga. The bronze 'Yoshkin cat' is found near Mari State University and is much frequented by people, perhaps especially students, touching parts of it for luck. In Slavic mythology a cat in the house represented the 'house spirit' and protection against evil.

Totti was the favourite cat of Finnish poet Edith Södergran, a well-known cat enthusiast. They liked to spend their summers at **Ozero Roshino**, a lake in the St Petersburg region, and that's where this monuent to Totti can be found. Sitting on a granite base, the bronze sculpture was designed by Finnish sculptor Nina Temo and is open to the public.

Cast-iron radiators were apparently invented in Russia in 1855, and in 2005 the city of **Samara**, south-western Russia – having found some 90-year-old radiators still working – decided to mark the 150th anniversary of the invention with a memorial. Cats and radiators go together, of course!

This is a 'bench of reconciliation' situated in the town of **Vidnoye**, just south of Moscow. It's believed that sitting on the bench will help quarrelling couples to reach a compromise.

This is a remarkable story. In 1987 a family from **Murmansk**, in northern Russia, brought their cat **Semyon** with them on a visit to Moscow (why?). Anyway, the cat became lost and they had to return home without him. Six years, 1200 miles and a collapse of the Soviet Union later, they were astounded when Semyon turned up on their doorstep in Murmansk! He deservedly gained an article in the *Journal of Murmansk* – and a monument, situated near the oceanarium and an amusement park.

The rendition (in stone) of an ivory cat is situated near the port offices on Kanonersky Island, an island just off **St Petersburg** and connected to it by a tunnel. In earlier times the island was known as Kissaisaari, meaning Cat Island, so the sculpture recalls those times.

In the courtyard of the main building at **St Petersburg** State University stands this poignant statue to the memory of cats that were used there in scientific research. Unveiled in 2002, it is 'a token of gratitude to those cats who have brought priceless benefits in the course of laboratory research'. The metre-tall cat, on a granite base, is the work of sculptor A.G. Dem and was commissioned by the university's Department of Physiology and Anatomy as well as the St Petersburg 'Felis' club.

The city of **Tyumen** is some 1600 miles east of Moscow, on the Tura river. In a small, green park – a nice shady place to relax in summer – are twelve cast-iron sculptures of cats and kittens, each covered with a special golden paint. The inspiration for them is the same as for the cat sculptures in Kazan and St Petersburg *(see above)* – the sending of thousands of cats to the city of Leningrad, as it then was, after its WW2 siege had ended, so as to deal with the depredations of the rats that were threatening to overrun the city. Tyumen contributed nearly 250 cats to the total of some five thousand that were sent from all over Siberia and 'honourably accomplished their mission'. The park with the sculptures is a favourite with Tyumen's citizens.

A sculpture based on the cartoon 'The Kitten from Lizyukov Street' is found in the city of **Voronezh,** some 300 miles south-west of Moscow on the river of the same name.

Zelenogradsk is a town some 20 miles north of Kaliningrad, and would like to be known as the most cat-friendly town in Russia! There are cat statues, cat figures on the traffic lights, and a person officially appointed to look after the 70-odd stray cats who frequent the town. There's also this statue to the cats, with a cat looking out of a 'window' on a little carousel, so you can spin around with him. See **Mini Fragments 5** for the traffic lights.

I don't have any information about this gentleman seated on a bench with his cat at his feet, other than that he is on Engels Avenue in the city of **Ivanovo**, a textile town about 160 miles north-east of Moscow.

This is a curiosity, a sculpture by Oleg Kislitsky of a cat with some sausages; it stands outside the Anzhero-Sudzhensk Meat Factory in **Keremovo**, a city in south-west Siberia. Entitles 'Talking Cat', apparently if one of the sausages is touched, the cat will say something, such as, 'The best fish is a sausage.'

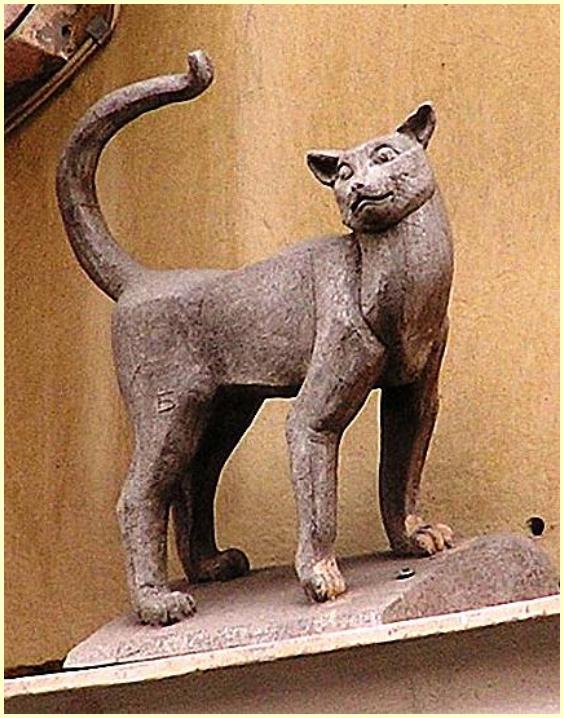
I think these are all part of the same sculpture about cats hunting pigeons in **Nizhny Novgorod**, but I have no other information.

A sculpture of ice-hockey mascot cat **Matroskin** was unveiled in August 2016 in **Vladivostok**. For her full story see **Pot-purri / Mini Fragments 4.** Scottish Cnstruction (Aug. 2016)

'Cat on Pole', a sculpture in **Novokuznetsk**, a city in south-western Siberia. No other information.

This is a sculpture of the fictional cat **Matroskin** in **Saratov**, a city in south-western Russia on the Volga river. Matroskin is an anthropomorphic cat, one of the characters in a children's novella by Eduard Uspensky, published in 1974, called 'Uncle Fedya, his Dog and his Cat'. It was the first in a series.

A wooden sculpture of Matroskin is to be found in **Kemerovo** in Siberia.



Vasilisa, on Malaya Sadovaya in **St Petersburg**, in memory of 'blockade cats' imported from the Yaroslavi region to save the city from a plague of rats during World War II.

On the opposite side of the street from Vasilisa sits **Yeisei**. The statue was unveiled in 2013. It's said that if you manage to throw a coin that lands by her feet, you will have good fortune.

‘Scientist cat’ in **St Petersburg**. No other information on this one.