



NEWS

Faberge Descendent Presents Latest Egg to City

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Photo by Alexander Belenky / SPT

Representatives of Theo Faberge, grandson of legendary Russian jeweler Carl Faberge, on Monday presented St. Petersburg with a Faberge Easter egg made specially by the 80-year-old jeweler for the city's 300th anniversary.

"My Easter egg is dedicated to the jubilee of your city, which my family has numerous connections with," Theo Faberge, who could not make the trip from the United Kingdom to Monday's ceremony for health reasons, wrote in a letter addressed to city residents.

The jubilee egg comprises a crystal body covered with hand-done engravings of nine palaces in St. Petersburg and its suburbs, and each palace includes an engraving of a tsar or tsarina. The Grand Palace at Peterhof, for example, is accompanied by an image of Peter the Great, the city's founder, while the profile of Nicholas II, who was deposed by the revolutions of 1917, is placed under the image of his last residence, the Winter Palace.

The egg is topped with a three-headed gold eagle, while the base is made of rare serpentico fantastico marble, gold and silver.

According to Philip Birkenstein, chairperson of the St. Petersburg Collection foundation, which owns all of Theo Faberge's St. Petersburg-themed works, it took the jeweler two years to complete the new egg.

"Theo spent thousands of hours to make all those engravings," Birkenstein said, adding that the egg has a market value of \$35,000.

Theo Faberge began work on St. Petersburg-themed eggs in 1985, dedicating them to various places in the city where the eggs are housed upon completion. The new egg will be housed in the Grand Palace at Peterhof.

Theo Faberge is the only living grandson of Carl Faberge, official jeweler to the Russian court in the late 19th century.

The Faberge jewelry firm, of which Carl was the best-known representative, was founded in the middle of the 19th century and produced items ranging from watches to binoculars to cigar cases - and, of course, the famous eggs.

The firm was famous for its unique techniques, beautiful stylings and the

unusual ideas executed in every item, and produced works in a range of styles from rococo to classical. The items were usually fabulously richly decorated with all kinds of precious stones, and often featured secret mechanisms.

Birkenstein, of the St. Petersburg Collection, said that, while Theo Faberge followed the traditions of his dynasty, he never copies the works of his ancestors.

Traditionally, Faberge eggs contain secrets or surprises hidden inside. The new egg includes a miniature replica of the Bronze Horseman, the monument to Peter the Great on Ploshchad Dekabristov that is one of St. Petersburg's most recognizable symbols.

Alexander Prokhorenko, head of the City Administration's External Affairs Committee, said the city was proud of its long links to the Faberge family.

"Something that once started as an applied art has turned into high art," Prokhorenko said.



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