

# Masterpieces from red clay

Souvenirs in Belarusian national style created in Radoshkovichi for almost half a century

By Viktor Korbut

Radoshkovichi is the best place to head if you need a true Belarusian souvenir, just 40 minutes drive from Minsk. A unique enterprise has been working there since the 1970s, creating masterpieces from rare red clay: ceramic tableware and decorative-and-applied items. Each is created using contemporary equipment, imported from Italy, while including hand made details, as in ancient times. Radoshkovichi ceramic items are works of art, unique to our nation.

There is a legend about the special red clay used to create these artworks. It is said that a strong young potter, named Gaida, fell in love with Marysya — a young girl from a noble family, a relative of Queen Bona. According to medieval law, those from different social classes could never marry. However, Marysya was also in love with Gaida and often ordered sculptures from him. One day, the beautiful girl asked Gaida to create a sculpture of her from special red clay. Searching for this rare material, Gaida came to the outskirts of

Radoshkovichi and found a deposit on a hillside. He spent many days on the task, injuring his hands so badly that he finally lay bleeding to death. When Marysya arrived with her servants, they found his dead body and the most beautiful sculpture from red clay. Local residents then named this place Gaidukovka and began using such red clay for their unique works, as seen today at Belkhudozhpromysly Ceramic Plant.

If you visit any restaurant serving Belarusian national cuisine, you can be sure that the pots were fashioned in Radoshkovichi. Each has its own master. Ivan Bura's parents worked at the plant, with their son following in

their footsteps. Mr. Bura knows pottery well and the baton is now being taken by Olga Yezhikova,

who has painted plates and pots for over a decade. The number of young craftspeople at Belkhudozhkeramika increases each year. For example, Svetlana Trufanova arrived here from the Vitebsk Region and thinks that she was very lucky. She explains, "A creative atmosphere has been created here. I can invent an idea on how to decorate a pot, a vase or a new souvenir and it's likely to be approved by the artistic council. Soon, the item is rolling off the production line. However, all our designs have reason behind them. For instance, I've been inspired by my reading of Belarusian mythology, drawing images which decorate our panels." This is how unique souvenirs with national accents are born.

Ceramic masterpieces from Radoshkovichi are found in every corner of our country: cas-



ARTUR PRUPAS

Beautiful items made from red clay in Radoshkovichi

serole dishes, bottles for drinks and huge clay aurochs — the most popular Belarusian souvenir since Soviet times. A new product has recently been developed: a ceramic flask bearing symbols of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. These are now given as gifts by the President of Belarus, bestowed on honorary guests of the country on special occasions.

visit the museum, which boasts over 5,000 exhibits, ranging from millennia old fossil fragments to contemporary pieces by acknowledged master potters. No two items are identical.

## Tourist notes:

Radoshkovichi is located on the most ancient road, connecting Minsk and Vilnius. In 1792, the last king of the Rzecz Pospolita, Stanisław August Poniatowski, gave Radoshkovichi a coat of arms depicting a Christian saint. Bronislav Tarashkevich also lived here, writing the first Belarusian language grammar book. Yanka Kupala, the People's Poet of Belarus, was baptised in the local church.

A monument to aviator Nikolay Gastello has been unveiled in Radoshkovichi's public garden. 70 years ago, on June 26th, 1941, at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, his crew heroically directed their falling aircraft towards a column of German military rolling stock.

The national holidays of Kolyady, Kupalle and Christmas have long been celebrated in Radoshkovichi, with festivities continuing until morning, theatrical performances and concerts by local folk groups. The town and its surroundings also boast plenty of springs, with water used since ancient times to cure illness. Churches and chapels are constructed over some, many of which are of significant artistic and architectural importance. Naturally, local legends and customs are often connected with these wonderful sites.

# Beautiful path to knowledge

Costumes of national minorities from China go on show

By Galina Gromova

The national costumes of Chinese minorities were created with unexpected diversity of fabrics and richness of colours and styles, reflecting the Chinese way of life and cultural legacy. The loosely fitting outfits of the northern nations and delicate costumes of those from the southern regions shared decorative beauty while representing the wisdom, moral ideals and aesthetic taste of successive generations.

In all, 56 nationalities reside in China, which occupies a huge territory. Most are of Han nationality (around 90 percent) while the others are national minorities, dispersed over various geographical and climatic conditions: huge plains and prairies, mighty mountains and deserts, the taiga and rain forests.

The exhibition show-



BELTA

National costumes combine diverse fabrics, rich colours and cuts

cases 26 costumes, as well as dolls in national costumes, hosted by the National History Museum of Belarus. Chinese students, currently studying in Minsk, were among those in attendance, performing a concert for guests.

It has become a tradition for the National History Museum of Belarus to work with the Chinese Embassy in creating such events. Minsk and guests of the Belarusian capital have already seen

the Beijing Opera, the most famous finds by Chinese archaeologists and Chinese folk musical instruments. Other exhibitions have explored the history of hieroglyphs, contemporary Chinese watercolour painting and Chinese ink painting.

Minsk recently hosted a show of Chinese folk costumes and a women's collection made from Chinese silk, entitled *Silk Path*. It was a great success, organised by the Chinese

Embassy to Minsk and the Belarusian Fashion Centre. The fashion show featured Chinese students and Belarusian models, who demonstrated historical costumes from the Han, Tang and other imperial Chinese dynasties, alongside national costumes of Chinese minorities, and a contemporary collection. The latter showcased the ancient traditions of China and famous Chinese silk, interpreted by modern Belarusian fashion designers.

# Gomel's Beehive harbouring talents

By Alena Germanovich

## Creative centre for young artists and sculptors set up in regional centre — similar to Parisian Beehive

The idea of creating an artistic laboratory followed the presentation of Vladimir Schastny's book. The Chairman of Belarus' National Commission for UNESCO launched his *Parisian School Artists from Belarus* last summer in Gomel, detailing the revolution in painting which occurred around the Beehive (La Ruche) in the French capital. It became a shelter for young and talented painters, who later founded the Parisian school.

The idea to set up such a centre was brought to life after negotiations between several Italian organisations and representatives of Gomel's Regional Executive Committee. The project is also to involve the international

Help for Chernobyl Children public association. The Belarusian-Italian Beehive Centre in Gomel will be a laboratory for novice painters, creating conditions to encourage innovation, creative thinking and experience sharing. It will support young artists from the region and from throughout Belarus, helping them develop their skills. It will be the only such laboratory in the country and will also allow creative youngsters to learn more about Italian culture — famous for its masters and masterpieces — while taking part in joint events.

Gomel's Beehive will house an exhibition hall, a room for master classes, a library and an Internet café, where discussion will be encouraged. The latter will incorporate elements of Belarusian and Italian culture in its design. The courtyard will be used to exhibit architectural, sculptural and landscape compositions.