

Title: The Ascension of Unskilled Labor: Critical Aesthetic Strategies from Prigov to Voina  
Author: Christina Schwartz, University of California, Berkeley

**Abstract:**

This paper will explore two performances from 2007 (Ascension/ The Group Voina Engages in Only Unskilled Labor and The Feast), collaborative efforts between Prigov and Voina, as a means to investigate the shift in performative/discursive strategies between the conceptualists and today's participatory art groups. Although the action Ascension never took place on account of Prigov's untimely passing, both Prigov and Voina released separate introductory comments in advance. A comparison of the introductory remarks reveals two conflicting models of discursive intervention within the performance. Prigov produces meaning through inhabiting recognizable discursive structures, revealing structural inconsistencies from within. Voina, on the other hand, operates from an external perspective, by literally enacting their critique. This dissonance can be traced through Voina's action in memory of Prigov, The Feast, where they appropriate conceptualist models (i.e. Kabakov's "total installation") within their own discursive framework. The rift between Prigov and Voina's aesthetic strategies appears to index a broader shift in political discourse in the Putin era toward overidentification, as well as a prioritization of the visual in the age of internet documentation.