

Title: The Power of Babble: Moscow Conceptualism and Postmodern Language Critique
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Public life in Soviet Russia relied heavily on metaphors of physical construction. The aesthetics of Soviet Realism likened all aspects of the nation, even to the physical bodies of its inhabitants, to a balanced, fully-functional machine. The propagandistic apparatus welded the author to the state in a way unprecedented in Russian history. The suppression of unofficial literature and the elevated status of state-sponsored authors resulted in a strangely solipsistic prison: the state was the only acceptable author, and language served to solidify the state. One avenue towards understanding communism and the postmodern aesthetic is to study the problematic role of the author in soviet society. Authorship and its relationship to the text became a very important window through which late twentieth century art attempted to reevaluate soviet culture. An examination of some of Russia's most prolific artists of the 70s and 80s reveals a striking trend: a dramatic rise in the use of language in the visual arts served to attack the role of language in Soviet culture. This attack allowed Russian artists to participate in postmodern trends that understood language as decentered and unstable; it was a project unique to those artists who worked not only to contend with a new era in the arts and humanities, but also to confront the difficulty of working unofficially in Soviet Russia.