

Penis Graffiti Dropped From Competition

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A painting of a large penis on a bridge in St. Petersburg has been dropped from the shortlist for an art prize, the organizers said.

The painting, which pointed skyward when the bridge was raised, was painted last June by opposition art group Voina, or War, to protest tight security in the city prior to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The picture, which was washed off by firefighters, faced the St. Petersburg headquarters of the Federal Security Service.

Organizers of the prize for innovation awarded by the State Center of Contemporary Arts and supported by the Culture Ministry had included the picture, which Voina had called "A Penis in KGB captivity."

But after failing to get approval to include the picture from Voina, the organizers removed it from the shortlist, they said on their web site.

Voina condemned the withdrawal of the prize from the competition.

"The repressive act of removing the Voina group from the award brings shame on the [organizers] and the Culture Ministry," one of the group's activists, Alexei Plutser-Sarno, said Sunday on his web page.

Voina has staged other stunts to protest against the state. In November, police detained three members of the group on charges of overturning police cars during a protest against police corruption.

One member, Leonid Nikolayev, lodged a case against Moscow at the European Court of Human Rights earlier this month to protest the arrest.

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