

Dóra Maurer

PB – Persona Berg

17 September – 15 November 2024

The exhibition presents a selection of graphic works from Dóra Maurer's *PB* series, created between 1969 and 1971. During the time these prints were made, Maurer was focused on reinterpreting and pushing the boundaries of graphic reproduction techniques. When viewed in the context of her entire oeuvre, these works show a noticeable shift towards abstraction, including only a few figurative elements with multiple meanings. Before the *PB* series, her works from the *Pompeii Cycle* and the *Evening Scenes* series still retained a narrative quality, recounting her travels to Italy and Greece. In these earlier works, figurative representation was important, even though she depicted these experiences through the lens of her own subjective reality. In contrast, the *PB* series emphasizes the technical process, focusing more on the observation and documentation of the process rather than the subject of the image itself. Following this period, her work began to explore action graphics, photography, and experimentation with materials and mediums. The *PB* series — realized between these two periods — can be interpreted as a point when she abandoned narrativity.

The title of the series, "P," represents "persona" (the person), and "B," represents "berg" (the mountain). The artworks labelled with *PB*, a combination of the two signs, refer to the symbiosis of the two through their formal language. To better understand these works, it is helpful to start with a broader interpretation of these terms, thinking in terms of the relationship between nature and humanity.

During this period, Maurer began experimenting with the transformation of the printing plate itself, cutting, crumpling, puncturing, and damaging it. This process turned the plate from a mere surface carrier into a form, the subject of the image. Maurer referred to her graphics as documents: *"The prints are documents. They are 'freeze-frames' of an event, captured stills during a process; however, the plate foil can be subject to further happenings. It retains every mechanical impact and shaping it undergoes, making it almost impossible to completely erase the marks, which come into play during the printing process."* (Maurer Dóra, *Rézmetszet, rézkarc* [Corvina Publishing], 1976, 37.) With these gestural interventions, she observed the mechanics of printmaking, moving away from storytelling towards systematic thinking, clearly visible in works like *PB 4* and *PB 7*. This systematic approach runs throughout her oeuvre. The resulting shapes and patterns often resemble organically occurring forms. Looking at the pieces in this series, one can associate the prints from the crumpled plates (e.g. *B 12*, *B 13*) with the layering of rocks. Many pieces in the series feature biomorphic shapes and hollow forms, which could be interpreted as natural phenomena or even parts of the human body.

The work titled *Biafra* does not bear the *PB* label and is not officially part of the series, however, it fits in with the pieces in the series in terms of time, technique and form. What sets it apart from the works exhibited here, and from Maurer's graphics in general, is that it is in color. Maurer rarely used color in her graphics, as she explained in her book *Rézmetszet, rézkarc*: *"In retrospect, it is noticeable: I never felt the need for colors in printed graphics. I still don't feel the need today. I printed in black, more precisely, with variations of black. I mixed yellow, blue, or red (brown) into the ink, 'modulated' the black, 'modulated' the black, which influenced the overall tone of the print. The colours of the inks are very strong and direct. I am convinced that the rich scale of black, white, and grays functions as potential, inherent colors that unfold in the viewer's imagination. There is no need to say the colour outright. Colors and color tensions can be conveyed not only through tones but also through the way tones appear: variations in linear, dotted, or planar etched surfaces, and by choosing the materials and acids used for etching."*

Boglárka Tóth

Dóra Maurer (1937) is a significant figure of international and Hungarian art history. From 1968, as a Hungarian-Austrian dual citizen Maurer fostered the development of the international network of relations of the Hungarian neo-avantgarde. Alongside her activity as an organiser in the art scene, her engagement in art pedagogy is also remarkable. From the 1970s, she has

regularly shown her works at significant international exhibitions. During the last few years, Maurer has taken part in group exhibitions held at MoMA, New York (*Transmissions. Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1960 – 1980*, 2015), Tate Modern, London (*Performing for the Camera*, 2016), Centre-Pompidou, Metz (*La Répétition*, 2023), Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (*Multiple Realities: Experimental Art in the Eastern Bloc, 1960s–1980s*, 2023), among others. In recent years, solo retrospective exhibitions of Dóra Maurer's work have been organized by Tate Modern in London (2019–2021), Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich under the title *Minimal Movements, Shifts, 1970–2020* (2020), Kunsthalle Bielefeld under the title *So sehen und anders sehen* (2021), and Vaszary Gallery in Balatonfüred under the title *The Thematisation of Structure* (2023).

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Biafra, 1969

aquatint, etching, 62.5x50.5cm, MD50-F/1/10

P 6 (Hip), 1970

aquatint, mezzotint, foil glued on, 70x50cm, MD56-7/25

B 5 (Mountain with Sign), 1970

aquatint, mezzotint, drypoint, 70x50.5cm, MD54-AP1

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B 11 (Earth section), 1971

aquatint, stich, 70x50cm, MD81-6/25

B 12 (Revelation of John text mark), 1971

hammered plate, aquatint, etching, 70x50.5cm, MD82-AP1

B 13 (In Memoriam E. Kuhn), 1971

(Neapolitan candle maker, Emil Kuhn engulfed in earthquake fault line.)

aquatint, creasing/pressing, perforating, 70x50cm, MD85-AP3

PB 0 (Man with Mountain), 1969

aquatint, mezzotint, drypoint, etching, rabbit fur, 50x70cm, MD55

PB 4 (Splitting, connecting), 1970

aquatint, face milling, 50x70cm, MD60-variation C

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PB 7 (Rotation, stretched in frame) – position 1-5, 1971

aquatint, sheet strips, wires, face milling, etching, 70.5x49.5cm, MD86