

MAURER Dóra

IXEK 7-I

24 November 2020 – 15 January 2021

Five out of four? Four out of three? And one out of seven? Through her newest series *IXEK 22* (2019-2020, "IXEK" is the plural of X in Hungarian), Dóra Maurer casts the role of the question-solver to the visitor, and encourages thinking about further possibilities by pointing out the expandable nature of the exhibited series consisting of six works. Maurer exposes her inclination towards mathematics and combinatory when she creates artworks according to a system made up of primary colors, and builds new structures by reordering and layering the red, blue and yellow fields. It requires the observation of details and the intellectual cooperation of the viewer to track the alterations of external and internal forms of these elements. To fully understand these works, not only cognitive actions, but also optical processes have to take place as the artist works with pigments, and the paint fulfills its function through color perception. However, color perception is quite relative, and the human eye is able to make visual recognitions only through comparisons and juxtapositions.

Dealing with color theory, Josef Albers used a theatrical parallel in his book titled *Interaction of Color* (translated into Hungarian by Dóra Maurer). Utilizing his analogy, the exhibited works can be interpreted as follows: the primary colors are actors performing different roles in various sets. Due to their arrangements and interactions they have to get into new characters – mixed colors – in response to the constantly changing conditions – the layering and intercrossing of shapes that look like nearly clear acetate sheets. Perceiving the almost human-like act of colors, Albers stated: "When you see how each color helps, hates, penetrates, touches, doesn't, that's parallel to life." When looking at Maurer's works, colors come into life: the red, blue and yellow surfaces, that create the illusion of semi-transparent films intersect, merge into and interweave with one another. As a result of their interactions, they create layers of intermediate colors and the sensation of volume and depth, the constitution of a picture plane that has the illusion of spatiality.

The space-illusion evoked by colors and shapes is reinforced by the fact that Maurer realizes these situation models as "shaped canvas" paintings. "I wanted more and more to give body and character to the planar surfaces, so I cut around them..." – said Maurer in 2008 when talking about her works titled *Quasi Images*. Then in 2016, in connection with the *Stage* series, she stated that her works are no longer "Quasi-images", but rather "Quasi-bodies." This way not only the colors, but also the constellations of colors and shapes turn into individual characters, and the exhibited artworks begin to behave almost as a group of figures. They independently start to act and proceed actions as entering and exiting the scene: "comes", states the handwritten note on the back of one of the works (*IXEK 22/1*, 2019), "goes" can be read on another (*IXEK 22/2*, 2020).

The observation of movement and displacement is a central thought around which Maurer's work is organized across all media. The intention to study and visualize these processes is as present in prints made since the 1960s, and in the photographs and experimental films of the 1970s, as it is in the paintings of recent years. Extending the principles laid down in the *Displacements* and *Quasi Images* series in the 1970s, Maurer's artistic practice shifted increasingly towards painting from the 1980s, when she created a system of different colored grids, then displaced them step by step resulting planar geometric structures. Later she also utilized similar gridlines in case of her shaped paintings, for instance when executing the *Quod Libet* series. In the case of the *Overlappings* series, on which she began working in the late 1990s, Maurer curved the lines of the grid already known from previous works, and filled in the areas with different colors, making the overlapping, seemingly immaterial and transparent, but in fact opaque color fields the central motif of the artworks. As early as 1982, she also was given the opportunity to make a site-specific project at Schloss Buchberg and expand her painting practice into three-dimensional space. By projecting her system originally consisting of planar structures into real space, Maurer created an "absurd space situation". This way she placed the viewer in a "total environment" and explored the relations between the human figure and the surrounding painted space. The exhibited *IXEK 22* series is thus logically integrated into Maurer's oeuvre and artistic program spanning decades. However, these works differ from the shaped paintings made in the last few years. Unlike in case of the previous "floating" shapes, a color field always appears in the form of a static, vertically elongated rectangle. Structures designed in this way do not take off, rather pull towards the ground – or, to use the initial theatrical analogy, their desire is to reach the level of their audience. By engaging and activating the visitor, Maurer's simultaneously analytical and sensual art thus creates a new communication channel based on physiology, in the language of colors and forms she explores the questions of human perception and reality.

RÁTKAI Zsófia

Dóra Maurer (1937) is an important 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. In recent years, Maurer has taken part in group exhibitions held at Centre Pompidou, Paris (*Promises of the Past*, 2011), The Art Institute of Chicago (*Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977*, 2011), MoMA, New York (*Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1960 – 1980*, 2015) and the Tate Modern, London (*Performing for the Camera*, 2016). Her latest retrospective exhibition, which is still on view, was opened in 2019 at Tate Modern. A catalogue titled *Quod Libet* – featuring Maurer's works created between 2009 and 2019, and an essay by Dávid Fehér – was published in parallel with the current exhibition by Vintage Galéria, Budapest.

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IXEK 22/2 (Penguins - goes), 2020
acrylic on canvas and wood, 123x85x4 cm, MD555

IXEK 22/1 (Penguins - comes), 2019
acrylic on canvas and wood, 124x84x4 cm, MD554

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IXEK 22/6 (Penguins), 2020
acrylic on canvas and wood, 123x80x4 cm, MD559

IXEK 22/3 (Penguins), 2020
acrylic on canvas and wood, 122x76x4 cm, MD556

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IXEK 22/4 (Penguins), 2020
acrylic on canvas and wood, 125x56x4 cm, MD557

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IXEK 22/5 (Penguins), 2020
acrylic on canvas and wood, 123x61x4 cm, MD558