



Prix de Print No. 9

Island by Victoria Burge

Juried by Diana Ewer

This iteration of the *Art in Print* Prix de Print has been judged by Diana Ewer. The Prix de Print is a bimonthly competition, open to all subscribers, in which a single work is selected by an outside juror to be the subject of a brief essay. For further information on entering the Prix de Print, please go to our website: www.artinprint.org/index.php/about#competitions.

Victoria Burge, *Island* (2013)

Collagraph, silkscreen, inkjet and chine collé, image 20 1/4 x 15 1/2 inches, sheet 26 1/2 x 20 3/4 inches. Edition of 25. Printed and published by Aspinwall Editions, New York. \$750.

As a map enthusiast, I was drawn to *Island* (2013) by Victoria Burge among the submissions to the Prix de Print. Maps have a beauty of their own and an intriguing abstract visual language. In a complex and interconnected world, they provide us with a comforting sense of knowing where we are, while simultaneously bringing out the explorer in us. Over the years, they have proven to be ideal departure points for comment and critique, full of explicit and buried meaning, while tied to the places—real or imagined—that they depict. Increasingly, contemporary artists—John Baldessari, Vik Muniz, Grayson Perry and Paula Scher, to name a few—are using cartography to explore and challenge established concepts of navigation and orientation. Burge's *Island* is a wonderful case in point.

Illusive and opaque, *Island* is confounding at first glance. I found myself returning again and again to reevaluate previous assumptions. The orderly pinpoints of light, connected by incisive white lines, initially suggested a night sky

with marked constellations. As I looked longer, the deep black and sharp white gave way to reveal recognizable landmasses—the islands of Kauai in Hawaii and Mindoro in the Philippines—beneath the scattered clouds of a storm-ridden sky.

Burge's layering of cartographic systems is disorienting: are we looking up at a sky full of stars, or looking down onto a moonlit ocean? Inviting exploration, *Island* steps between terrestrial and celestial cartographies in delicate counterpoint.

Subtracting and abstracting information to generate new connections is part of the artist's broader interest in what she calls "the architecture of line" and the multiple dimensions and implications of space. Burge first explored this concept by making alterations to books before recognizing the potential of antique maps rich in historical importance, symbolism and occasional misrepresentation. Since then, the artist has been drawing directly on to the surface of maps in acrylic, ink and pencil, often working with 19th-century material such as the map that forms this print's substructure. Her aim, she says, is to "abstract the original cartographic information, by plotting invented connections and networks of possible trajectories." City locations "become stellar coordinates with connecting lines representing paths of travel or commute; the many ways one leaves and returns to a place."¹ Reminiscent of an aviation map depicting flight paths between interconnected cities as nodes of communication, *Island* can be read as a web linking people (past and present) to coded systems of communication and exchange we have used to navigate for centuries. Conflating internal and external geographies, *Island* also suggests neural networks that line the topographical to the psychologi-

cal, the literal to the imagined, echoing our own interaction with maps.

The print's mottled black surface evokes a desire to discover what lies beneath, and at the same time offers a visual metaphor for the layering of memory, for connections charted between past and present to imbue existence with a greater sense of continuity. It also touches on the relationship between lived experience and the enigmatic, multifaceted nature of memory.

In its production, *Island* merges analog and digital technologies to create a print with deeply evocative sculptural qualities—the dimensionality of *Island* moving inwards or outwards depending on how you wish to interpret it. Burge gives credit to printer and publisher Ann Aspinwall for the tonal richness and meticulous execution: the black *sfumato* was created by printing a collagraph plate over a digitally printed scan of an original old map, with the collagraph element taking the place of the artist's ink and brushwork in her drawings. Aspinwall, a skilled collagraph printmaker, says her objective was "to create an image that was by no means a reproduction of Burge's drawings on maps, but to assimilate the depth and painterly qualities of those works. One of the points of an artist working with a printer is for the artist to achieve results that he or she could not do alone."² ■

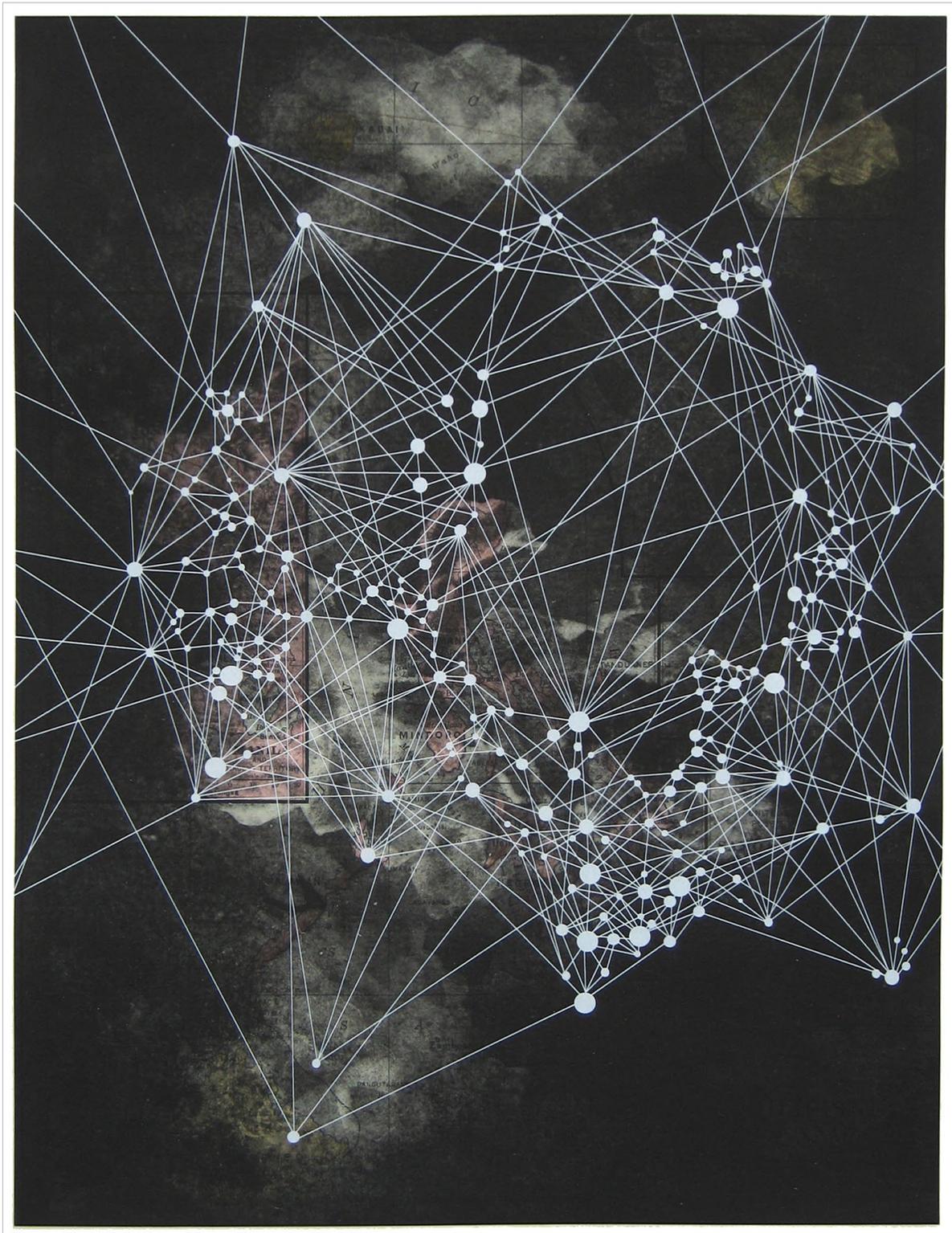
Diana Ewer is a New York-based curator, consultant and contemporary print specialist.

Notes:

1. All quotes from Victoria Burge, phone interview 24 Nov 2014, or the artist's notes submitted for *Island*.
2. Email correspondence with Ann Aspinwall, 25 Nov 2014.

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