

C. G. BOERNER

DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

Distraction / Abwechslung
3 October 2022

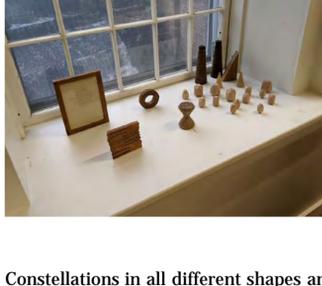
My *partie de campagne* on a rainy day back in the spring of this year led me through the rolling hills of the Monadnock Highlands in southwestern New Hampshire to Harrisville, a hamlet nestled along one of the many creeks, streams, and rivers in this verdant part of the country. In the past, many places like this were mill towns where the power of water was used to produce textiles and paper.



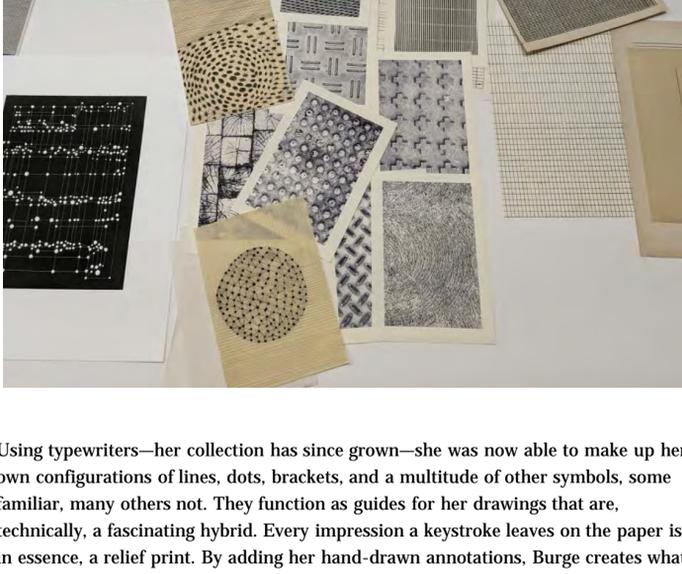
The modest scale of its operations might have helped Harrisville to remain the only industrial community of the early nineteenth century in America to survive to a large extent in its original form. The beautifully preserved buildings still stand and woolen yarn is being spun with hydropower to this day. The spotty cellphone reception and the white noise emanating from the water's flow over the weir help to create an atmosphere that appears splendidly free from the distractions of our quotidian life.



This calmness also pervades the studio where Victoria Burge's new body of work was completed in 2021–22. She had started it at a small desk at her home during the early months of the pandemic. When we all had to shelter in place, Burge began to explore making patterns by using a mechanical typewriter she had found.



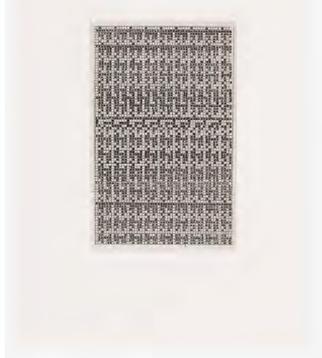
Constellations in all different shapes and forms are omnipresent in this airy room whose windows look out on the rushing water: poetic arrangements of little sculptures on the windowsill; pages from atlases of both terrestrial and astronomical; graph paper from ancient ledgers. Burge loves to work with old papers, relishing in their imperfections and patina, the fact that they contain their own “history of being held by many hands.” She often repurposes these found sheets to serve as underlying structures for her art.



Using typewriters—her collection has since grown—she was now able to make up her own configurations of lines, dots, brackets, and a multitude of other symbols, some familiar, many others not. They function as guides for her drawings that are, technically, a fascinating hybrid. Every impression a keystroke leaves on the paper is, in essence, a relief print. By adding her hand-drawn annotations, Burge creates what might best be described as “typewriter drawings” that are both, prints *and* drawings.



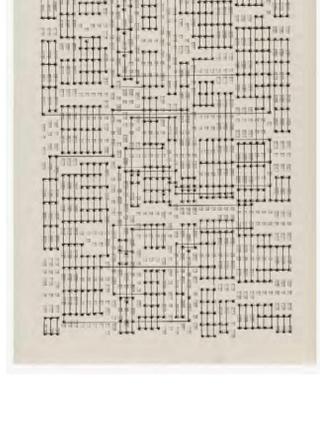
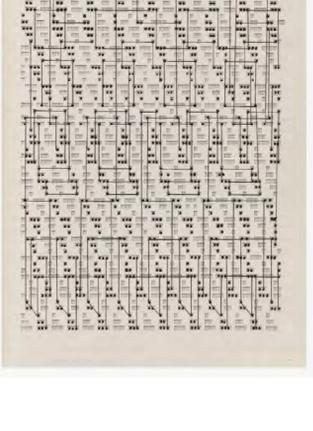
The technical interplay between mechanical and manual mark making finds its equivalent in the oscillation between abstraction and referentiality. The keys Burge uses are mostly symbols and special characters rather than letters. Yet while echoes of her recent exploration of textile design manuals and draft annotations for weavers clearly inform the works, they are hardly instructions for craftspeople. On the contrary: as Elleree Erdos observes in the catalogue of our upcoming exhibition, a weaver would find them “illegible.”



What therefore remains at the core of Victoria Burge's work is the fundamental question of abstract art's readability. She has always been interested in “structural networks, galaxies of information, and patterns of connectivity.” The drawings that make up *Galaxie and Underwood*, which will go on view at our New York gallery on October 6th, develop this further into an artistic code whose interpretation is open-ended, and intentionally so.



Seeing these images, a young viewer recently told the artist that “they look as if they are trying to tell us something.” Now it is on us as beholders to find out what this “something” could be. And since unambiguously and hardly ever, we should not be surprised when the answer is different for everyone who is willing to join this visual dialogue.



The exhibition will be on view October 6–8 and open by appointment October 18–29
(which includes the week of the IFPDA Print Fair).

The opening reception is on Thursday, October 6, from 5 to 8pm.

Victoria Burge: Galaxie and Underwood

the catalogue

an earlier note on the readability of abstract art

