

Come Alive!: The Spirited Art of Sister Corita

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At 18, Corita Kent (1918-86) entered the Roman Catholic order of Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles, where she taught art and eventually ran the art department. After more than 30 years, at the end of the 1960s, she left the order to devote herself to making her own work. Over a 35-year career she made watercolors, posters, books and banners--and most of all, serigraphs--in an accessible and dynamic style that appropriated techniques from advertising, consumerism and graffiti. The earliest, which she began showing in 1951, borrowed phrases and depicted images from the Bible; by the 1960s, she was using song lyrics and publicity slogans as raw material. Eschewing convention, she produced cheap, readily available multiples, including a postage stamp. Her work was popular but largely neglected by the art establishment--though it was always embraced by such design luminaries as Charles and Ray Eames, Buckminster Fuller and Saul Bass. More recently, she has been increasingly recognized as one of the most innovative and unusual Pop artists of the 1960s, battling the political and religious establishments, revolutionizing graphic design and making some of the most striking--and joyful--American art of her era, all while living and practicing as a Catholic nun. This first study of her work, organized by Julie Ault on the 20th anniversary of Kent's death, with essays by Ault and Daniel Berrigan, is the first to examine this important American outsider artist's life and career, and contains more than 90 illustrations, many of which are reproduced for the first time, in vibrant, and occasionally Day-Glo, color.

one of the most outspoken and well-known activists within the Catholic Church during the turbulent 1960s. Corita Kent, once known as Sister Mary Corita, I.H.M., never backed down from her desire to call people to the simplicity of the Gospel through revolutionary art.... Would the canon of modern art recognize a woman--and a woman religious at that--for contributions that equal those of her contemporary, Andy Warhol? (Suzanne Wielgos America: The National Catholic Review)

the bright billboards of California's freshly invented media landscape were Corita's chief inspiration; this places her in a continuum of religious artists... who have recognized that faith, when argued for visually, works well when grounded in the everyday. If Corita looks good to non-believers, it is because she pulls from her belief a blend of sunny optimism, delectation of reality and general sense of purpose (Martin Hebert Frieze)

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