



And if only we arrange our life according to that principle which counsels us that we must always hold to the difficult, then that which now seems to us the most alien will become what we most trust and find most faithful. How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting

to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something that wants help from us. Rilke

Corita Kent *Right* 1967. Courtesy Corita Art Center, Los Angeles.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
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Sister Corita's Summer of Love

23 JULY – 16 OCTOBER 2016

About the Exhibition

Sister Corita's Summer of Love surveys the graphic art of Sister Corita Kent (1918–86), an unsung figure in pop art. In addition to her screenprints, the show includes works by Colin McCahon, Ed Ruscha, Michael Parekowhai, Jim Speers, Scott Redford and Michael Stevenson, plus documentary films and Christian videos featuring kinetic typography that offer a rich context for her work.

About the Artist

Sister Corita was a Roman Catholic nun. From 1936 to 1968, she lived and worked at the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in Los Angeles, heading their art department from 1964 to 1968. In the 1960s, she became famous for her distinctive screenprints, with their graphic treatments of words, in bold, often fluoro, colours. A magpie, Corita drew on the language of advertising and packaging, signs and slogans, poetry and lyrics, to develop her own messages of joy and faith, love and protest.

In her work, we can see the influence of Matisse's cutouts, abstract expressionism, Saul Bass's graphics, the Eames folksy modernism, and Andy Warhol. She saw and was inspired by Warhol's breakthrough Campbell's Soup can show at LA's Ferus Gallery in 1962. Her works often had a political message. They supported the civil-rights movement, protested the Vietnam War, and lamented the assassinations of American political leaders. In 1968, Corita left Immaculate Heart and relocated to Boston, where she remained for the rest of her life. There, she is remembered for her 1971 *Rainbow Swash* gas-tank mural, a gigantic, colourful symbol of peace, and one of the city's most beloved landmarks.

Further Information

Watch

- *We Have No Art* 1967, a documentary on Corita, directed by Baylis Glascock, 25min.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HtiQFQTFPM
- *Become a Microscope* 2009, a documentary on Corita, directed by Aaron Rose, 23min.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaOWOULeH-0
- *Corita Kent: Mixing Pop Art with Messages of Love and Hope*, 4min.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAwzv8uhN-Y
- *Corita Kent: 2016 AIGA Medalist*, 3min.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=tivdlh2mhlU
- *Corita: Breaking (All) the Rules*, lecture, 53min.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsdDAiBKR8A

Read

- *A Nun Inspired by Warhol: The Forgotten Pop Art by Sister Corita Kent* by David C. Barnett.
www.npr.org/2015/01/08/375856633/a-nun-inspired-by-warhol-the-forgotten-pop-art-of-sister-corita-kent
- *She Was an Artist, She Was a Nun, She Is Sister Corita Kent* by Edward Goldman.
www.huffingtonpost.com/edward-goldman/she-was-an-artist-she-was_b_7599078.html
- *Nun with a Pop Art Habit* by Jonathan Shaw.
<http://harvardmagazine.com/2015/08/corita-kent-nun-with-a-pop-art-habit>

Art Terminology

pop art – an art movement that emerged in the mid-1950s and 1960s that explored aspects of mass-media consumer culture, such as branding, advertising and comic books.

screenprinting – a printing technique where ink is transferred through a silk stencil.

Pre-Visit Discussion

- Watch one of the short films on Corita on YouTube. Have a class discussion. What did you learn about her and her art? Did you find anything about her life or work surprising? Does her work remind you of something you have seen before? What are you expecting to see in the Gallery?

Post-Visit Discussion

Refresh your memory of your Gallery visit. Look closely at Corita's work *Right* (overleaf).

- Describe the ways Corita has treated text in *Right*. Think about cropping, capitalisation, upper-and-lower-case letters, serif and sans-serif typefaces, distortion, layering and handwriting. In what other ways does she treat and manipulate text in the exhibition?
- What do you notice about the ways the words and shapes have been arranged in *Right*? Describe the compositional elements. Think about colour, shape and space; diagonal, horizontal and vertical lines; scale, juxtaposition, contrast and connection points; layering and reversal; simplicity and complexity. What was the most memorable or striking composition that you saw at the Gallery?
- Read the text in *Right*. Do you think Corita has a message for us in this work? What might it be? In your own words, describe how you interpret its meaning. What other messages do you remember her communicating through her work?

Art Activities

Protest Placard

- Paint a placard in support of a cause you believe in. Re-use empty cardboard boxes to make it. Discuss what topical causes you could support (e.g., environmental care and recycling, equal rights, anti-bullying, child poverty, healthy choices, anti-drugs, etc). After deciding on your cause, write a slogan which conveys your message in as few words as possible. Use a combination of stencilled, collaged and hand-painted letters to present it. Use bold lettering and bright colours.
- Arrange a protest march, hikoi or peace walk around your school or local area to celebrate and share your placard messages.

Found-Type Collage

- Create a collage using found lettering in a variety of typefaces. Look for lettering in magazines and newspapers and on food and other product packaging. Cut out and use the lettering directly, or photocopy it to reduce or enlarge the print. Use a combination of single letters, whole words and phrases.
- Arrange the lettering horizontally and vertically, placing different letters and words at right angles to each other. Experiment with different arrangements before finalising your composition. Place contrasting typefaces together. Think about the ways in which the words and letters create different shapes on the page. Try cropping some letters or words along the top, bottom or sides.
- When you are happy with your composition, glue it in place.

Art History Activities

- Corita is often described as a pop artist. Research definitions of pop art and list those aspects of it that could apply to Corita's work. Look at one of the following pop artists: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenburg or Jasper Johns. Compare their work to hers. Identify similarities and differences. Think about secular commercial imagery, advertising, graphic art, satire, repetition, 2-D imagery, mechanical reproduction, mass media, popular culture, irony, consumerism, etc.
- Corita's work has resonance with New Zealand artists Colin McCahon, Michael Parekowhai, Jim Speers, and Michael Stevenson, who exhibit alongside her in this show. Select one of these artists and compare and contrast their work with Corita's. What connections can you see between their works? What differences are there?

Sister Corita's Summer of Love is a joint project with New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, curated by its Director, Simon Rees.