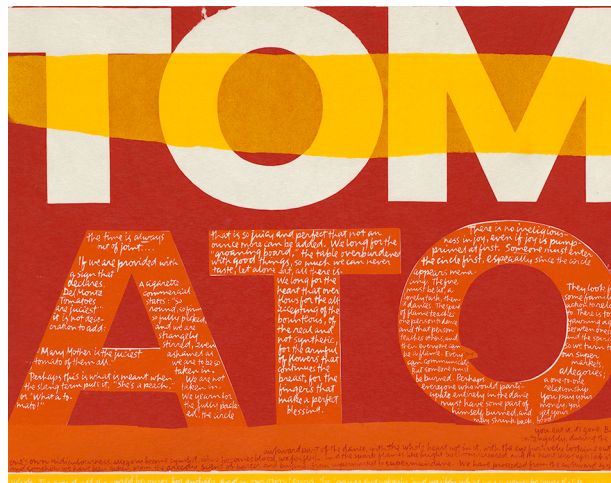


Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

***Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* Opens September 3, 2015, at the Harvard Art Museums**



Corita Kent, *the juiciest tomato of all*, 1964. Screenprint. Collection of Jason Simon, New York. © Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles.

Cambridge, MA
June 18, 2015 (updated August 14, 2015)

The Harvard Art Museums present *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*, a special exhibition on display September 3, 2015 to January 3, 2016 at Harvard before travelling to the San Antonio Museum of Art, where it will be on view February 13 to May 8, 2016. The exhibition is curated by Susan Dackerman, the former Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints at the Harvard Art Museums (2005–2014) and current consultative curator of prints. Corita Kent was an activist nun who juxtaposed spiritual, pop cultural, literary, and political writings alongside symbols of consumer culture and modern life in order to create bold images and prints during the 1960s. Also known as Sister Mary Corita, Kent is often seen as a curiosity or an “anomaly” in the pop art movement. *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* positions Kent and her work within the pop art idiom, showing how she is an innovative contemporary of Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, and other pop art icons. The exhibition also expands the

current scholarship on Kent's art, elevating the role of her artwork by identifying its place in the artistic and cultural movements of her time.

Corita Kent (American, 1918–1986) was a Roman Catholic nun, an artist, and an educator. From 1936 to 1968 she lived, studied, and taught at the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles, and she headed the art department at the college there from 1964 to 1968. In 1968, Kent left Immaculate Heart and relocated to Boston, where she lived until her death in 1986. The screenprints she created during the 1960s are typical examples of pop art, embodying the vivid palette, focus on everyday subjects, and mass-produced quality of ephemeral objects. *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* examines Kent's screenprints as well as her 1971 design painted on the Boston Gas (now National Grid) tank, a roadside landmark in Boston.

The exhibition frames Kent's work within the pop movement while also considering other prevailing artistic, social, and religious movements of the time. In particular, the exhibition explores how Kent's work both responded to and advanced the concerns of Vatican II, a movement to modernize the Catholic Church and make it more relevant to contemporary society. The church advocated, among other changes to traditional liturgy, conducting the Mass in the local, vernacular language. Kent, like her pop art contemporaries, simultaneously turned to vernacular texts for inclusion in her prints, drawing from such colloquial sources as product slogans, street signs, and Beatles lyrics.

"Because of Kent's status as a nun, her biography has been the focus of most scholarship about her work," said Dackerman. "However, when you examine her work alongside contemporary pop artists like Warhol and Ruscha, it becomes clear that she was a critical and relevant voice in the emerging pop discourse of the 1960s."

The exhibition grew out of conversations Dackerman had with Jennifer Roberts, the Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities in the Department of History of Art and Architecture (HAA) at Harvard, around the time that Roberts was teaching an undergraduate seminar on pop art during the Spring 2010 semester. Roberts often brought her students to examine prints in the museums' collections, and these meetings generated discussions about Kent's work as well as its relationship to the work of her better-known contemporaries such as Warhol, Ruscha, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist, among others. The following semester, HAA professors Henri Zerner and Benjamin Buchloh taught a graduate seminar on reproductive technologies in the 1960s, which ignited interest in printed pop among Harvard's graduate students in art history. Soon after, a project group came together, providing a forum for conversations about Kent's work that ultimately led to the development

of the exhibition's six central themes: Los Angeles, c. 1962; The Word; Salvation at the Supermarket; L.A. Traffic; The Political Landscape; and Boston, 1971: The Gas Tank. Kent's papers, deposited at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, were an important resource to the team of scholars and students.

"Installed in our generous new Special Exhibitions Gallery and reflecting our research and teaching mission, *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* brilliantly recalibrates, recasts, reconsiders, and repositions Corita Kent's remarkable work," said Deborah Martin Kao, the Landon and Lavinia Clay Chief Curator and Interim Co-Director of the Harvard Art Museums. "In this enlightening special exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, Susan Dackerman and her collaborators also argue for a broadening of how we apprehend pop art, cleaving it from its iconic and seemingly unassailable historic wrapper and returning it to the immediacy of the beat of the streets of 1960s Los Angeles, New York, and even Boston."

Works on Display

Over 150 prints, along with a selection of films, books, and other works, are included in the exhibition. More than 60 of Kent's prints, depicting language garnered from popular culture such as product slogans and road signs, appear alongside about the same number of works by her prominent contemporaries, including Warhol, Ruscha, Lichtenstein, Jim Dine, and Robert Indiana.

Rarely shown (and newly restored) films by Thomas Conrad and Baylis Glascock that feature Kent at Immaculate Heart in the 1960s are presented in the exhibition. The films include Glascock's *Mary's Day 1964*, *Mary's Day 1965*, and *We Have No Art* (1967), as well as Conrad's *Alleluia: Being a True Account of the Life and Times of Sister Mary Corita IHM* (1967). Another screen in the exhibition is dedicated to slides taken by Kent and her associates at Immaculate Heart College during the 1950s and '60s. These slides depict their pop art projects as well as document visits to museums, galleries, and artists' studios. The slides also include shots of magazine advertisements, supermarket goods, and street signs, many of which were incorporated into Kent's screenprints.

In 1971, Kent created a bold, pop art design for the Boston Gas (now National Grid) tank located alongside I-93 south of downtown Boston. Her vivid rainbow swashes of color on the tank can be viewed as the culmination of her engagement with pop art, providing Boston with its own pop art monument, not unlike the Hollywood sign in Los Angeles. A large photo mural of the tank will appear in the exhibition, along with the first public presentation of the 7-inch-high wooden tank model on which Kent executed her design.

StoryCorps

In conjunction with *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*, StoryCorps, one of the largest oral history projects of its kind, will collect stories about Kent and her “rainbow swash” design painted on the Boston Gas (now National Grid) tank in Boston. On September 4, 5, and 6, StoryCorps’ MobileBooth will be parked at Harvard University’s Science Center plaza to record 40-minute interviews with participants who may have had local knowledge of Kent or who have lived in communities near the iconic gas tank. Each conversation will be preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This oral history project is a partnership between StoryCorps, the Harvard Art Museums, and National Grid. Harvard Common Spaces has also provided support for the StoryCorps project. 90.9 WBUR, Boston’s NPR news station, is the media partner for the StoryCorps project.

Programming

Corita Kent and the Language of Pop will open with a celebration on Thursday, September 3. This free public event includes open hours in the galleries from 5pm to 9pm, and features a panel discussion at 6pm with curator Susan Dackerman, Harvard professor Jennifer Roberts, history of art and architecture graduate student Taylor Walsh, and American studies graduate student Eve Payne. A celebratory reception in the Calderwood Courtyard follows the discussion.

During the course of the exhibition, lectures will be given by Thomas Crow, the Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and Nicholas Mirzoeff, professor of media, culture, and communication at New York University; two screenprinting workshops will be held in the museums’ Materials Lab; 1960s-era pop art films will be shown in the museums’ Menschel Hall; a special evening event focused on the intersection of food and social justice will be held for Harvard students; and targeted outreach to Cambridge Rindge and Latin School faculty will be made in conjunction with the exhibition. There is also planned collaboration with Harvard’s Woodbury Poetry Room involving a poetry walk with local poet Eileen Myles in October. Detailed information about programs is forthcoming at harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar.

On the museums’ website, the current Art + Science digital tour will add a stop that includes video showing conservation of one of Kent’s prints by staff at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies. harvardartmuseums.org/tours

Harvard Art Museums Fellows at the Patron level and above will be invited to a private curator-led preview and a festive evening to celebrate *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*.

harvardartmuseums.org/support/fellows

A related exhibition exploring Kent's teaching, artistic process, career, and activism, *Corita Kent: Footnotes and Headlines*, is on display August 24 through September 18, 2015, at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University. <http://bit.ly/CoritaKentFootnotes>

Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue, published by the Harvard Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press, will be available in September 2015. Through nearly 90 illustrated entries and four essays by distinguished scholars, the publication fills a gap in the scholarship about Kent's work. The catalogue was edited by Susan Dackerman and features essays by Dackerman; Julia Bryan-Wilson, associate professor of modern and contemporary art at the University of California, Berkeley; Richard Meyer, the Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History at Stanford University; and Jennifer L. Roberts, the Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University. The illustrated entries were written by Dackerman and graduate students from a variety of disciplines. The catalogue, with a retail price of \$50, will be available for sale in the Harvard Art Museums shop, located adjacent to the Calderwood Courtyard on Level 1. Purchase in-person at the shop (hours: 10am–5pm, daily; closed major holidays) or contact the shop at 617-495-7066. To request a copy for review, contact Jennifer Aubin in the museums' Communications Division at jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu or 617-496-5331.

Credits

Organized by the Harvard Art Museums and curated by Susan Dackerman, the former Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints at the Harvard Art Museums (2005–2014) and current consultative curator of prints.

Corita Kent and the Language of Pop has been made possible by support from Barbara Ketcham Wheaton and the late Robert Bradford Wheaton, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation, Jeanne and Geoff Champion, John Stuart Gordon, Marjorie B. and Martin Cohn, Ellen von Seggern and Jan Paul Richter, the Rosenblatt Fund for Post-War American Art, the Anthony and Celeste Meier Exhibitions Fund, and the Harvard Art Museums Mellon Publication Funds, including the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund.

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and major corporate support from National Grid.

Modern and contemporary art programs at the Harvard Art Museums are made possible in part by generous support from the Emily Rauh Pulitzer and Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Fund for Modern and Contemporary Art.

Lenders include: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Thomas Conrad, Cupertino, California; Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles; Davis Museum at Wellesley College; Fine Arts Library, Harvard University; Baylis Glascock, Los Angeles; Mary Anne Karia (née Mikulka), New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Grid, Boston; The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; Jason Simon, New York; and three anonymous lenders.

Press Preview

A preview of *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop* will be held for members of the press on Wednesday, September 2, 2015, 8:30–10:00am. Kindly RSVP by Tuesday, August 25 to jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu. Parking is available, by permit, at the nearby Broadway Garage, 7 Felton Street. To reserve a permit, please indicate the need for parking in your email.

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States.

The Harvard Art Museums' recent renovation and expansion builds on the legacies of the three museums and unites their remarkable collections under one roof for the first time. Renzo Piano Building Workshop's responsive design preserved the Fogg Museum's landmark 1927 facility, while

transforming the space to accommodate 21st-century needs. Following a six-year building project, the museums now feature 40 percent more gallery space, an expanded Art Study Center, conservation labs, and classrooms, and a striking new glass roof that bridges the facility's historic and contemporary architecture. The new Harvard Art Museums' building is more functional, accessible, spacious, and above all, more transparent. The three constituent museums retain their distinct identities in this new facility, yet their close proximity provides exciting opportunities to experience works of art in a broader context. harvardartmuseums.org

Hours and Admission

Daily, 10am–5pm. Closed major holidays. Admission: \$15 adults, \$13 seniors (65+), \$10 non-Harvard students (18+). Free for members; youth under 18; Cambridge residents; and Harvard students, faculty, and staff (plus one guest). On Saturdays, from 10am–noon, Massachusetts residents receive free admission. Visit our website for information about other discounts and policies.

harvardartmuseums.org/plan-your-visit

Exhibitions, Events, and News

Our Special Exhibitions Gallery presents important new research on artists and artistic practice, and our University Galleries are programmed in consultation with Harvard faculty to support coursework.

harvardartmuseums.org/visit/exhibitions

Lectures, workshops, films, performances, special events, and other programs are held throughout the year at the museums. harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar

Check out *Index*, our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums. magazine.harvardartmuseums.org

Members and Fellows

With access to exclusive perks and programs, Harvard Art Museums members enjoy special moments to celebrate and explore the museums' world-class collections and special exhibitions.

harvardartmuseums.org/support/members

The Fellows are a dynamic group of art enthusiasts and supporters who enjoy the most exclusive opportunities that the museums have to offer. harvardartmuseums.org/support/fellows.

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

For more information, please contact:

Lauren Marshall
Associate Director of Communications
Harvard Art Museums
617-495-4750
lauren_marshall@harvard.edu

Jennifer Aubin
Public Relations Manager
Harvard Art Museums
617-496-5331
jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu