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OCTOBER 26, 2016

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Corita Kent, *The Word Pitched His Tent*, 1962, screen print on paper, 26 x 31".

PORTLAND  
**Corita Kent**

PORTLAND ART MUSEUM  
1219 SW Park Avenue  
August 13 - January 29

In an intimate gallery below a spectacularly fabulous Andy Warhol prints retrospective rests Sister Corita Kent's contemplative antidote: a pithy hotbed of rainbow-hued prints that chart her trajectory from art-teaching nun to politically radical Pop art *maestra*. While at first one might feel that Big

Andy upstairs dwarfs Underdog Kent in a wrestling match for best silk-screener, looking at Warhol situates Kent as a fellow genius appropriator of commercial advertising and lover of mechanical art's democratic potential. This art-historical repositioning is significant because the forthright, earnest messages in her early works have arguably, and unfortunately, freaked out some viewers. Now, those squeamish about spiritual conversation can simply eye-candy away on the formal splendor of the artist's geometric overlays, valiant treatments of scale, unorthodox typographic experiments, and striking color palettes. In *The Word Pitched His Tent*, 1962, solid cadmium red, magenta, and black tunnel shapes are stacked on top of one another, with a crude yellow sun stamped above them. The title references John 1:14, in which Jesus pitches his tent with humankind: With this, the image becomes an abstract ode to alliances and modesty.

To detach Kent's empowering sociopolitical, epigrammatic slogans from her graphic sensibility, though, would mean missing her subversive wordplay: memos about benevolence, love, peace, and transforming media bombardments into simplified, reflectively humane insights. Later works borrow snippets of D. H. Lawrence, Navajo chants, and e.e. cummings, such as *Crazy Enough*, 1968, a lush, shoegaze-y yellow-and-black floral collage (a paean to a bumblebee?) with the poet demurely quoted at the bottom: "I thank heaven somebody's crazy enough to give me a daisy." Absorptive and inviting, Kent's prints leaves one invigorated.

— Trinie Dalton

