

Corita Kent at Marciano Art Foundation

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Text by Nahui Garcia



Corita Kent, *The Sorcery of Images* (installation view) (2025-26). Image courtesy of the artist and Marciano Art Foundation.
Photo: Michael Anthony Hernandez.

A teacher, human rights advocate, and former religious sister, Corita Kent reshaped the art curriculum of Immaculate Heart College (IHC) in Hollywood, where she rose from faculty to chair of the department. During her tenure, she began experimenting with printmaking, eventually earning widespread recognition as an artist in the medium. Yet Kent also maintained a robust photography practice: From 1955 to 1968, she produced more than fifteen thousand 35mm slides documenting a wide range of subjects, from celebratory parades and puppet shows to classroom activities and handmade crafts. In *Corita Kent: The Sorcery of Images* at the Marciano Art Foundation, a selection from her archive animates the large, ceiling-high screens of a three-channel installation, presented alongside a grouping of serigraphs and a reading area for archival texts. Gathered here, these lesser-known photographs open a window into Kent's creative process, where her observant eye selects and crops snapshots that capture transcendent moments of ordinary life.

Billboards, advertisements, and mass-produced goods feature prominently in Kent's slides. Taken at a grocery store, an extreme closeup of an Ivory Snow detergent box shows a woman holding a baby, both dressed in pristine white clothing. That photograph is paired with a procession of skirted women holding bright, cherry-red banners in front of the Watts Towers. Kent's camera often captured scenes largely populated by women (many of them her colleagues and collaborators), in locations like festivals and classrooms. Her sustained focus on female companionship, along with her interest in household products, points to Kent's early awareness of feminist issues—in particular, the expectations placed on women's labor inside and outside the home.

Several images illustrate Kent's signature approach to printmaking, in which language is borrowed from popular culture and recontextualized to express her restless faith. In a few photographs, Kent's camera isolates words taken from newspaper and magazine advertisements, such as Crest and Kindness; another phrase, printed at the bottom of a crumpled page, features the more elaborate If you want to reach me, you'll find me Cosmopolitan. Similar to her photographs of mass-produced items, these advertisements are stripped away from consumer culture, their meanings shifted to reveal the ways in which words gain meaning through juxtaposition. Separated from their original contexts, Kent's strategic cropping of these words exposes the subjective nature and malleability of language embedded in everyday life. Standing before the installation's towering screens immersed within Kent's perceptive gaze, one is compelled to linger in the gallery where we are encouraged to read alongside the person next to us.



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