

e-flux Announcements

Kristan Kennedy, Sister Corita Kent, and Hilda Morris: *IF*

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College



Corita Kent, *IF* (1965). 23 x 35-1/2 inches. Serigraph.

January 15, 2026

IF is a group exhibition attuned to the split condition of living now—when calamity feels ambient and hope persists less as assurance than as impulse. In times shaped by existential threat, systemic fracture, and chronic uncertainty, the exhibition brings together works from the Reed College Art Collection by Kristan Kennedy, Sister Corita Kent, and Hilda Morris to trace the psychic oscillation between joy and dread, belief and collapse, radiance and void.

The title, *IF*, hangs open like a thought unfinished. It names a conditional state—tentative, fragile—where possibility exists alongside the awareness of loss. What remains unresolved is precisely the point. Across generations, these artists inhabit this tension through practices that differ materially and aesthetically yet resonate in spirit, each probing how faith, resilience, and vulnerability endure when the ground beneath them is unstable.

Sister Corita Kent meets upheaval with conviction and brightness. Her work harnesses language, color, and simple form as instruments of moral clarity, insisting that joy—far from naïve—is a form of resistance. It does not deny suffering but confronts it with resolve. Hilda Morris moves in a quieter register. Her sculptural forms carry weight and stillness, the hush of the Pacific Northwest—the kind that arrives not as silence but as saturation: rain, moss, duration. They ask for patience, for looking inward, for a pause in which uncertainty can be held rather than resolved.

Kristan Kennedy inhabits the charged space between these poles. Through frank materiality and conceptual openness, Kennedy's work reflects how meaning is made, undone, and tentatively reassembled. It acknowledges fracture without surrendering to it, embracing instability as a condition rather than a failure. In this unsettling terrain, material endurance becomes a metaphor for psychic survival. Paintings unfold slowly, less the result of decisive gestures than of sustained exposure—to time, to the repetition of living.

Working with raw, unstretched linen, Kennedy submits the fabric to cycles of soaking, machine washing, scrubbing, and the gradual accumulation of sumi, dye, pigment, and food stuffs. Months are absorbed into the cloth. What emerges is not an image in the conventional sense, but an atmosphere—color that drifts, thins, and resurfaces, as though recalling itself while simultaneously slipping away. Fragile particles of spices and smears of fats cling insistently, catching light like wounds that refuse to close or a pot that refuses to be scrubbed clean. The paintings feel wrung out and hung out to dry, pushed beyond comfort into a state where grace is earned rather than assumed. The artist and material appear to have passed through something together, arriving at an uneasy equilibrium that remains transitional rather than provisional.

Together, the works in the exhibition form a conversation that mirrors the emotional weather of our moment: the constant swing between hope and despair, urgency and inertia, faith and doubt. *IF* offers no answers and proposes no escape. Instead, it asks us to remain with contradiction—to recognize the tenderness embedded in fear, and the quiet persistence required to imagine a future that is anything but guaranteed.