

Corita Kent

love and a butterfly

kaufmann repetto and Andrew Kreps Gallery are pleased to announce *love and a butterfly*, an exhibition of works by Corita Kent. Including early screenprints, as well as the rarely exhibited watercolors made during the last years of Kent's life, the exhibition traces how the expressive marks of her own hand and an introspective connection to the natural world bookend her practice.

Corita Kent made her first serigraphs in the early 1950s - compositions that were equally influenced by Byzantine Art and the stained glass windows she encountered during her travels in Europe, as they were by the modern world. Depicting religious scenes and densely layered in jewel-like tones, these works belie their technical complexity, at times requiring over twenty individual screens to construct their final image. Masked by hand, Kent built a distinctive visual style in which energetic brushstrokes and swaths of color give way to figure and image. By the end of the decade, as her reputation as both an artist and educator had grown, Kent's prints became increasingly abstract, often incorporating handwritten text quoted from poetry, song lyrics, and scripture to more broadly address life's cycles. In *yellow spring*, 1960, a poem by Juan Ramón Jiménez Mantecón reads "atop the bones of the dead, god opened his yellow hands" above undulating fields of orange and yellow. While Kent would use photographic means to produce the bold, graphic works that defined her output of the mid-sixties, she continued to embrace the handmade quality of her prints through the interplay of layered color and an idiosyncratic registration of screens.

After leaving the Order of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1968, Corita Kent completed her most overtly political work, *heroes and sheroes*, appropriating images from news media to reflect on the social movements of the time. With her subsequent relocation to Boston, her practice radically shifted, moving away from a pop sensibility to create works that reflected her growing environmental concerns. Often meditative in tone, these were deeply intertwined with her own watercolor paintings, which would become a daily practice in the 1970s and 1980s, directly translating her brushstrokes to her prints. Executed plein-air and diaristic in nature, Kent's watercolors allowed for a more spontaneous approach to image-making, recording the world around her. The negative space of the page would retain a prominent role, helping to shape flora and landscapes. While these works mark an insular turn, Corita simultaneously remarked that her 1983 billboard *we can create life without war*, which directly reproduced her watercolor, was the most religious thing she's ever done. Seen together with her early works, they demonstrate the ongoing commitment to peace in both her inner and outer worlds that defined her life and work.

Corita Kent (1918–1986) was an artist, educator, and advocate for social justice. At

age 18 she entered the religious order Immaculate Heart of Mary, eventually teaching and then heading the art department at Immaculate Heart College. During the course of her career, her artwork evolved from using figurative and religious imagery to incorporating advertising images and slogans, popular song lyrics, biblical verses, and literature. Throughout the '60s, her work became increasingly political, urging viewers to consider poverty, racism, and social injustice. In 1968, following mounting pressure from the conservative Archdiocese of Los Angeles, as well as exhaustion from her increasingly public profile, she left the order and moved to Boston. After 1970, her work evolved into a sparser, introspective style, influenced by living in a new environment, a secular life, and her battles with cancer. She remained active in social causes until her death in 1986. At the time of her death, she had created almost 800 screenprint editions, thousands of watercolors, and innumerable public and private commissions.

In 2024, Corita Kent's work was included in *Con i miei occhi (With my eyes)*, the Holy See Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale. Kent's work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Ludwig Museum, Cologne; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Mumok, Vienna; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Frac Ile-de-France, Paris; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, among others. Notable exhibitions include: *Corita Kent, La révolution joyeuse*, Collège des Bernardins, Paris (2024); *Someday is now - Danh Vo presents Corita Kent*, Nivaagaard Collection, Nivå, Denmark (2023); *Joyful Revolutionary*, TAXISPALAIS Kunsthalle Tirol, Innsbruck (2020), *Corita Kent: Get With The Action*, Ditchling Museum of Art+Craft, Ditchling, England (2019); *Corita Kent and the Language of Pop*, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA (2015); *Someday is Now*, Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY (2013); *People Like Us: Prints from the 1960s by Sister Corita*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2007).