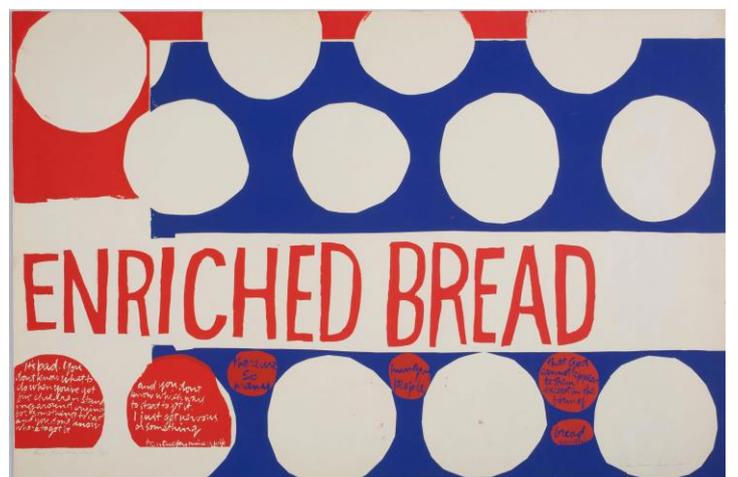
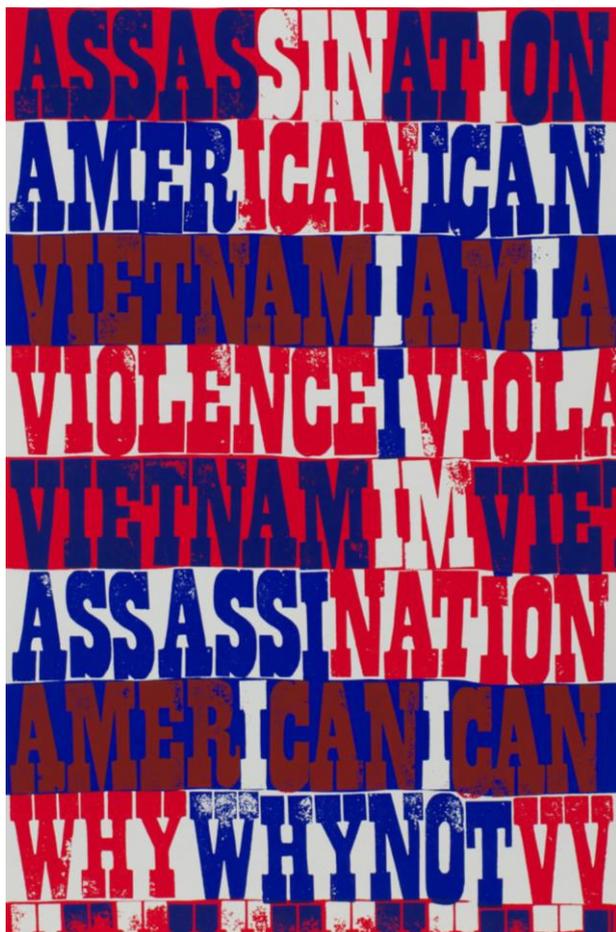
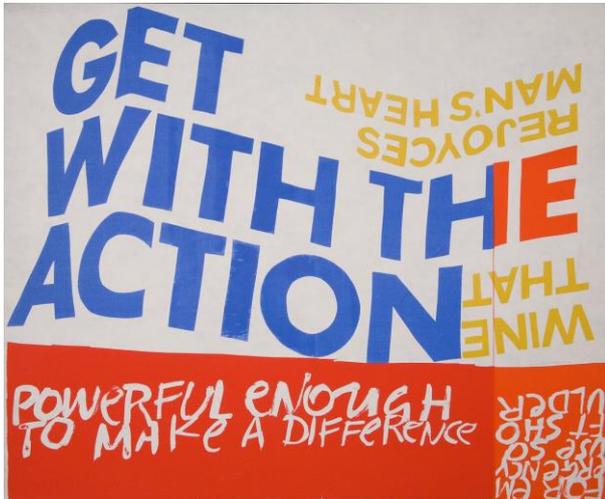


The UK's biggest ever show of work by the pop artist, social activist and nun



House of Illustration has opened the biggest UK show of pop artist, social activist and nun Corita Kent (1918-1986).

Her joyful, subversive screen prints revolutionised typographic design, challenged the Roman Catholic Church and protested against misogyny, racism and war.

A contemporary of Andy Warhol, admired by Charles and Ray Eames, John Cage and Saul Bass, this exhibition will celebrate a radical woman who brought innovative art, spiritual renewal and social critique to 1960s Hollywood.

Designed by the acclaimed Fraser Muggeridge Studio, the exhibition features 70 serigraphs showing the evolution of her work: from lesser-known pieces from the early 1950s to Corita's iconic 1960s screenprints as well as later works created after she was released from her vows.

#### **House of Illustration Curator Olivia Ahmad says:**

“Corita Kent was one of the most remarkable artists of the 20th century and the influence of her experiments with typography, print and day-glo colours on generations of designers cannot be overstated. Her affirmation of life and demand for social justice is as vital and essential today as it was when she was provoking the religious and political establishments of 1960s America.”

#### **MORE INFORMATION**

**In the early 1960s Corita's pop art juxtaposed religious texts with advertising slogans** from packaging, signage and billboards, capturing the clamour and commercialism of LA's post-WWII financial boom. Her pioneering use of cutting and pasting created layers of meaning that elevated the everyday to the sublime: her 1965 screenprint *power up* derived from a gasoline advert, while her 1967 work *come alive* appropriated the iconic Pepsi-Cola slogan as an exuberant affirmation. Corita said of LA, “Up and down the highways we see words...that read almost like contemporary translations of the psalms for us to be singing on our way.” However, her 1964 print in homage to Mary, *the juiciest tomato of all*, was regarded as sacrilege by the church and banned from being displayed.

**In the late 1960s Corita increasingly used art as protest against racism, misogyny, poverty and war.** Working within the confines of America's most conservative diocese, her resolutely radical voice was hugely influential in the country's anti-authority shift, capturing the spirit of the anti-Vietnam war movement, civil rights movement and feminism. Her 1969 screenprints layered documentary material from *Life*, *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines – Corita's “contemporary manuals of contemplation” – with song lyrics, poetry and quotes from thought leaders, set against fluorescent colours inspired by psychedelic concert posters. These include 1969's *if i*, promoting compassion in the face of violence after Martin Luther King's assassination.

Having become a nun aged 18, **Corita was a professor in the Immaculate Heart College art department from 1947-68 and led it to legendary status.** This progressive education environment was driven by Corita's principles of observation, analysis and experimentation, and hosted visiting lecturers including Charles and Ray Eames, John Cage, Alfred Hitchcock, Saul Bass, Herbert Bayer and Jean Renoir. Her teaching became inseparable from her artistic practice with the college's collective output including ambitious installations and processions that caused consternation at the Archdiocese of LA.

Using photographs to capture the billboards, packaging and signage from her urban environment in 2D form, **Corita pioneered low-tech manipulations such as collage or cut-and-paste that have since become defining features of computer applications for graphic design.** Her choice of screen printing as a medium was determined by her wish for art to be widespread and accessible; large, unnumbered editions were disseminated through churches, community centres, fairs, galleries and vans driven to gatherings.

#### **FOR EXCLUSIVE IMAGES AND INTERVIEWS**

Contact Amy Forshaw: [amy.forshaw@houseofillustration.org.uk](mailto:amy.forshaw@houseofillustration.org.uk) / 020 3696 2028

**IMAGE CREDITS** (clockwise from top left)

for emergency use soft shoulder, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA  
stop the bombing, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA  
come alive, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA  
that they may have life, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA  
american sampler, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, CA

## LISTINGS INFORMATION

Corita Kent: Power Up

8 February – 12 May 2019

House of Illustration, 2 Granary Square, King's Cross, London N1C 4BH

Open Tuesday-Sunday 10am-6pm (closed Monday), one ticket gives admission to all three galleries (£8.25)

020 3696 2020, [houseofillustration.org.uk](http://houseofillustration.org.uk), [facebook.com/houseofillustration](https://www.facebook.com/houseofillustration), [@illustrationHQ](https://twitter.com/illustrationHQ)

Other exhibitions currently on: [Journeys Drawn: Illustration from the Refugee Crisis](#) (until 24 March 2019)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**House of Illustration** is the UK's only public gallery dedicated solely to illustration and graphic art. Founded by Sir Quentin Blake it opened in July 2014 in King's Cross, London. Its exhibition programme explores both historic and contemporary illustration and the work of defining and emerging illustrators, amplified by a vibrant programme of talks and events. A registered charity, House of Illustration supports and promotes new talent, commissions new work and has a pioneering learning programme delivered by professional illustrators. [houseofillustration.org.uk](http://houseofillustration.org.uk)

**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 in and then leading the art department at Immaculate Heart College. Throughout the 1960s her work became increasingly political, urging viewers to consider poverty, racism, and injustice. In 1968, exhausted from conflict with the archdiocese and a frenetic schedule of exhibiting, teaching and lecturing around America, Corita sought dispensation from her vows and moved to Boston. She undertook commissions from corporate companies including Samsonite, The US Postal Service and Boston Gas, for whom she designed the iconic 150 foot-high *Rainbow Tank* in 1971. She also developed a plein air watercolor practice and evolved 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. She is held in prominent private and public collections all over the world. Upon her death, Corita endowed the Immaculate Heart Community with her estate. In her spirit, the Corita Art Center was created and holds the largest collection of her work and archival materials. [corita.org](http://corita.org)



With thanks to Corita Art Center and Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft