

Corita Kent, The Eye in the Sun, serigraph.

Sister Corita Kent is one of the pioneers and leading practitioners of Pop Art, a movement that came to prominence in the 1960s and represented a rejection of the total abstraction popularized by the Abstract Expressionists. Instead, Pop Artists chose to reengage with the world around them, none more so than Sister Corita Kent, whose intensely political works rose to the foreground during the turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer **Corita Kent, The Eye in the Sun, serigraph** (\$7/1,000) for sale in our April Gallery Auction, held on Friday, April 19th.



The image centers around a purple mark in the shape of a “C” with ragged, splattered edges, especially towards the top of the form, on a white field. In the center-right, within the two ends of the “C” is a small ball of yellow, its edges rendered in a similarly rough manner. At the bottom of the

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composition, there is a straight mark in the same yellow, which is cut off by the edge of the canvas, while the top of the mark's irregular edge blends into the purple stroke above. There is grey writing in hand-written cursive at the top and bottom left of the painting; the top reads "Something unbearable makes it possible to break thru a ceiling. S[imone]. Weil" and the lower text reads "[T]he eye is the sun in the mouth - to see is to grasp[.]"

This piece uses abstract marks that hint at recognizable forms and bright, approachable colors to inspire closer examination and leaps in interpretive imagination. This work takes the approachability of Pop Art but enhances it with the political engagement of activist art and formal abstraction of the preceding Abstract Expressionist movement. While often grouped with Pop Artists due to her use

of serigraphy, bright colors, and the generally approachable nature of her works, Sister Corita Kent created works far more openly political than her counterparts such as Andy Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein. Quoting Simone Weil, the French philosopher, feminist, and volunteer anti-fascist soldier, Sister Corita Kent references the history of activism which she came to represent, in contrast to the movement towards art which was heavily indebted to the excess of mid-century consumerist culture.

This work maintains many of the characteristic elements of Sister Corita Kent's style, including its use of bright color, abstraction, and inclusion of text, while diverging through its stronger abstraction and extended text. Like much of her body of work, *The Eye in the Sun* features bright colors that immediately draw the viewer's attention and provide an accessible entry point to

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the work. This interest in accessibility is continued via the inclusion of text, also a common feature of her works, but in this case, the nature of the chosen text diverges slightly from her typical selections. By choosing to include a longer, more philosophical text, rather than a usual call to action, this piece both reminds the viewer of the depth of her theoretical knowledge and invites extended contemplation when compared to a more typical work.

Michaan's Auctions will also be offering **Corita Kent, "Lucky Earth,"** serigraph (\$5/700), a bright and

vibrantly colored work from the artist. Also including a significant amount of text, this piece features large fields of red, orange, and pink, upon which white text and blue triangular forms are placed. Inviting close reading and an immersive perspective, this work is a powerful reminder of Sister Corita Kent's masterful use of color.

Sister Corita Kent (née Frances Elizabeth Kent) was born in late 1918 in Fort Dodge, Iowa, the fifth child of a notably artistic family. She graduated from a Los Angeles Catholic Girl's High School in 1936, where her artistic talent



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was noticed by several nuns of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a Catholic teaching institution she would join upon turning 18. She took classes at nearby Otis College of Art and Design before earning her B.A. from Immaculate Heart College and M.A. at the University of Southern California. Upon graduation, she quickly became the head of the art department at Immaculate Heart College and continued her silkscreen work, which became very popular during the various protest movements of the 60s and 70s. Despite frequent opposition from within the church, Sister Corita Kent continued to be a prolific printer, especially after her cancer diagnosis in the early 70s, until her death at the age of 67 in 1986.

Corita Kent, The Eye in the Sun, serigraph (\$7/1,000) and **Corita Kent, “Lucky Earth,” serigraph** (\$5/700) will be offered in

Michaan’s Auctions April Gallery Auction on Friday, April 19th. The sale features excellent furniture pieces from the Asian Art Department, in addition to important works from notable artists, and a number of fine jewelry pieces from the Fine Art and Jewelry departments. The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by George Demont Otis and Gideon Jacques Denny, while the Asian Art Department offers a 12-panel folding screen and a hanging rug. Also included in the sale are platinum, diamond, and gold items from the Jewelry Department.

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