

DOORWAY

IF

February 21-May 17, 2026

**Kristan Kennedy
Sister Corita Kent
Hilda Morris**

**The Douglas F. Cooley
Memorial Art Gallery**

***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 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.

Hilda Morris offers us forms that stand upright yet face inward, like thoughts that

carry the hush of the Pacific Northwest—the kind that arrives not as silence but as saturation: rain, moss, duration.

Morris' sculptures rise like pronouns stripped of nouns, gestures detached from narrative. Each seems to have arrived at itself slowly, through attrition rather than decision. Calligraphy offers a useful analogy, though Morris does not write so much as extend the act of writing into air. Her sculptures feel like strokes held in three dimensions, the moment of contact prolonged until it acquires weight. As in calligraphy, space here is not background but partner, flourishing in restraint—the pressure of a hand, the pause between marks, the faith that a single line can carry spirit. The void leans in.

Northwest Mysticism, often misunderstood as reticence, is better understood as ethical patience. Morris belongs to this lineage. Her work assumes that meaning



reveals itself slowly, and only to those willing to remain. In this sense, her sculptures are not about the body but about inhabiting one—standing upright in uncertainty, accepting gravity, consenting to time.

Morris's work is where the exhibition holds its breath. It neither consoles nor alarms. It steadies. At a moment when hope feels loud, inappropriate, or hollow, her sculptures propose another register: belief as posture, endurance as grace. They remind us that not all conviction announces itself. Some of it simply stands there, waiting to be noticed.

Sister Corita Kent trusted words fully, almost recklessly. For her, text drove the work forward, gave it a spine. Corita understood that text is never neutral. Every phrase carries a history of use and misuse, belief and coercion. Language arrived like diurnal rhythms already freighted with urgency, lifted from

advertising slogans, pop songs, scripture, protest signs. She cut, cropped, repeated, misaligned. Meaning slipped, then reassembled itself with fresh insistence. The results feel exuberant, but the joy is disciplined—earned through attention. She did not iron out their contradictions; she amplified them.

What makes her work endure is its refusal to separate optimism from difficulty. Corita's words do not float; they press. They confront the viewer with imperatives—love, care, pay attention—while acknowledging how hard it is to live up to them. The language is accessible, even familiar, but its placement is strategic, the way a sermon knows when to whisper and when to shout. Text becomes an incident: something that happens to you like the passing along of an oral history. In her hands, words learned how to shout and sing at the same time.

Corita's faith—both religious and humanistic—was active, porous, willing to be tested by the world it addressed. She believed that language could still mean something, even after it had been flattened by the commerce of capitalism or dulled by repetition. Her work extricates words from daily exhaustion and sends them back out, charged again.

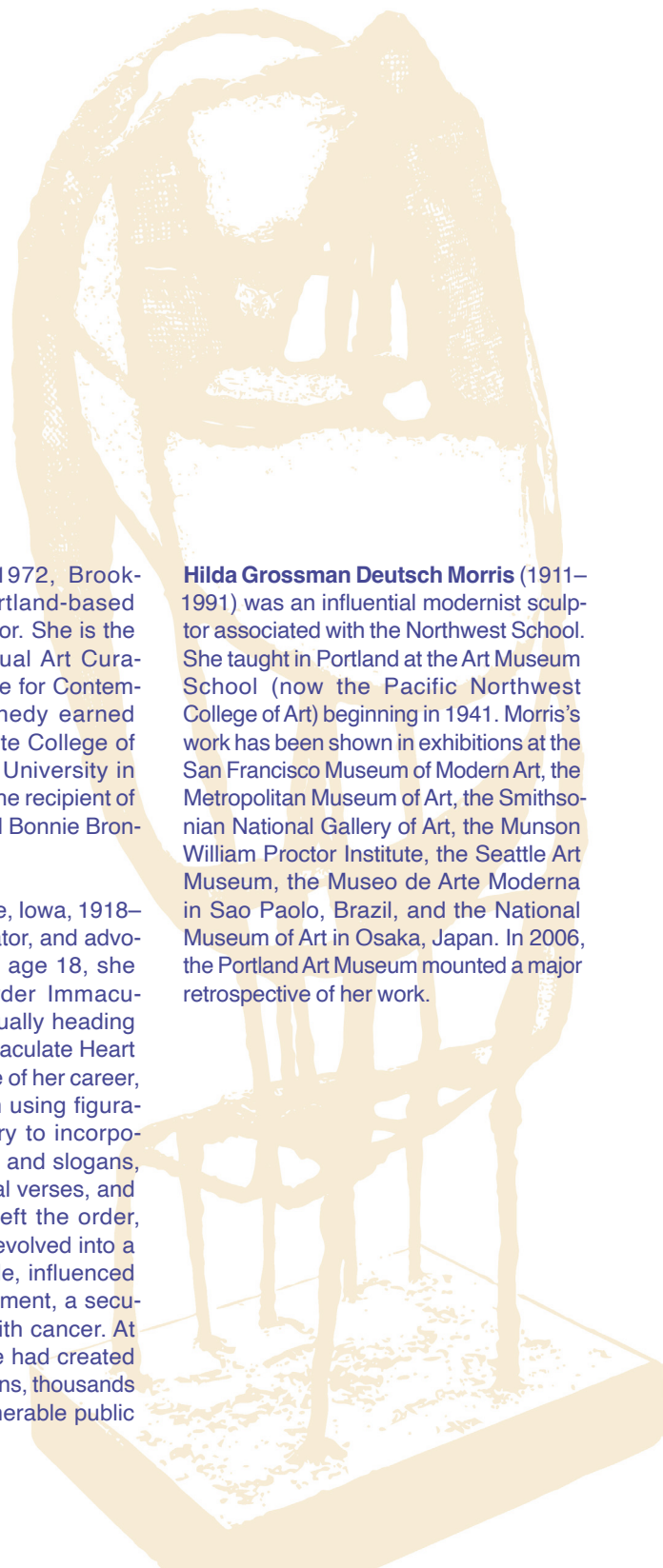
In *IF*, Corita's prints arrive like signals—bold, radiant, unmistakably present. They meet the exhibition's ambient dread not with denial but with insistence. If Hilda Morris offers belief as stillness, Corita offers belief as speech: public, vulnerable, unresolved. Her words do not promise salvation nor do they harden into concrete certainty. They ask for participation. They remind us that hope, when it survives at all, often survives as a sentence spoken aloud with intention.

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. This unsettling terrain, where 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.

The surfaces hold contradiction at every turn. 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. Beauty and a disinclination towards it coexist without hierarchy. 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.

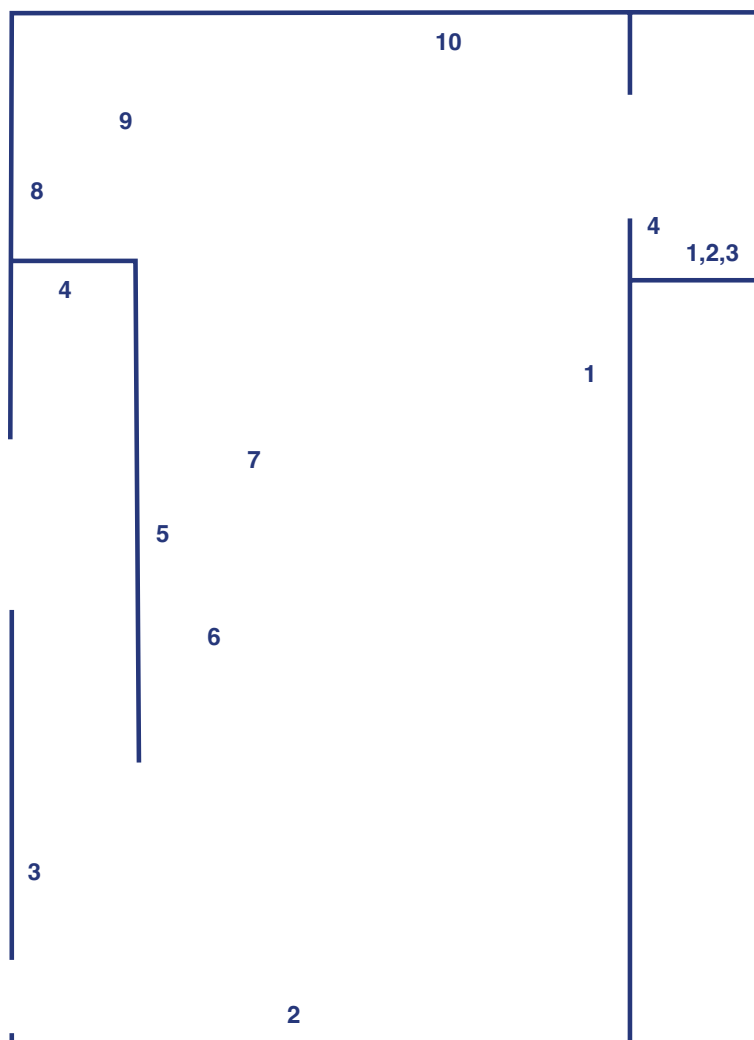
Together, the works in the exhibition form a conversation that mirrors the emotional weather of our moment: the constant swing between hope and despair, urgency and inertia, faith and doubt. *IF* offers no answers and proposes no escape. Instead, it asks us to remain with contradiction—to recognize the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



Kristan Kennedy (b. 1972, Brooklyn, New York) is a Portland-based artist, curator, and educator. She is the Artistic Director and Visual Art Curator at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Kristan Kennedy earned her BFA at New York State College of Art and Design at Alfred University in 1994. Kristan Kennedy is the recipient of the twenty-seventh annual Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award.

Corita Kent (b. Fort Dodge, Iowa, 1918–1986) was an artist, educator, and advocate for social justice. At age 18, she entered the religious order Immaculate Heart of Mary, eventually 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. In 1968, she left the order, and 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. At the time of her death, she had created almost 800 serigraph editions, thousands of watercolors, and innumerable public and private commissions.

Hilda Grossman Deutsch Morris (1911–1991) was an influential modernist sculptor associated with the Northwest School. She taught in Portland at the Art Museum School (now the Pacific Northwest College of Art) beginning in 1941. Morris's work has been shown in exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art, the Munson William Proctor Institute, the Seattle Art Museum, the Museo de Arte Moderna in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and the National Museum of Art in Osaka, Japan. In 2006, the Portland Art Museum mounted a major retrospective of her work.



LOBBY

1.
**Corita Kent
daily** (1967)
36 x 30 inches
serigraph

2.
**Corita Kent
liquid fire** (1961)
23.25 x 30 inches
serigraph

3.
**Corita Kent
help or something** (1967)
23.25 x 35 inches
serigraph

4.
**Corita Kent
ideas must work** (1975)
11.5 x 16 inches
serigraph

GALLERY

1.

Hilda Morris

Broken Wheel (ca. 1960)

10.5 x 9.88 inches

bronze

2.

Kristan Kennedy

G.D.B.D.S.T.F.A.F.S.M.T.A.W.M.

I.N.I.S.T.A.W.I.U.U.I.N.T.N.T.L.D.

B.L.S.B.T.T.R.F.L.I.K.A.X.I.D.N.T.

F.T.H.E.V.N.S. A.N.G.L.D.S.T. E.C.E.

C.W.C.W.C.B.D.B.D.S.C.H.M.P.G.N.

O.L.M.S.T.D. (2017)

variable dimensions

bleach, dye and sumi ink on linen

3.

Corita Kent

new life (1966)

31 x 25.5 inches

serigraph

4. **Hilda Morris**

Shield Bearer (1963)

74 x 23 x 34 inches

cement on metal

5.

Kristan Kennedy

Floor Thing (2016)

156 x 192 inches

oil, acrylic, India ink, salt, Procion
dye, socks, rock, and almond oil,
on canvas

6.

Hilda Morris

Centaur's Laugh (1960-1961)

36.5 x 42 x 28 inches

cement on metal

7.

Unknown

**leather pouch containing four
rocks**

7.5 x 1.5 inches

8.

Kristan Kennedy

N.P.C.E. (2017)

56 x 34 inches

bleach and acrylic ink on linen

9. **Hilda Morris**

Presence of the Beginning (1963-
1964)

56 x 33 x 40 inches

cement on metal

10.

Corita Kent

IF (1965)

23 x 35.5 inches

serigraph

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COOLEY