



## Contemporary Art Gallery

Vancouver, BC

## Corita Kent

September 9 to October 30, 2011  
B. C. Binning Gallery

## Thomas Bewick

September 9 to October 30, 2011  
Alvin Balkind Gallery

## Federico Herrero

Opening reception:  
Thursday September 8, 6–9pm

September 9, 2011 to January 15, 2012  
Window Spaces





# Corita Kent

*To create is to relate*  
September 9 to October 30, 2011  
B. C. Binning Gallery



Corita Kent teaching (c. 1968)

Corita Kent became internationally recognized for her brightly coloured silkscreen prints during the 1960s and 1970s. Admired by Charles and Ray Eames, Buckminster Fuller, John Cage and Saul Bass, her work was an outlet for her spiritual and political beliefs, reflecting her desire for social justice and peace during the period of the Vietnam War. As a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles, she ran the Art Department there until 1968 when she left the Order and moved to Boston to pursue her practice. Over the next 18 years Corita produced more than 400 prints and made many commissioned works such as book covers and textbook illustrations. She also remained socially engaged, designing posters and billboards for Share, The International Walk for Hunger, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Amnesty International.

The exhibition is developed in association with the Corita Art Center, Los Angeles and Museum of Craft and Folk Art, San Francisco. Special thanks to curator Natasha Boas.

To accompany the exhibition the reprinted publication *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita* by Julie Ault is available priced at \$29.95. Please see CAG reception for details.

All Corita Kent images reprinted with permission from the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles.

*To create is to relate* is the first solo exhibition in Canada of the work of Corita Kent (1918–1986). Corita was one of the most innovative and unusual pop artists of the 1960s, who, living as a Catholic nun in California, battled political and religious establishments while revolutionizing graphic design and encouraging the creativity of thousands of people.

Corita taught at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, since the 1950s both celebrated and criticized for its progressive educational programmes. Here Corita along with other sisters initiated a lecture series that today reads as a cultural who’s who of the time, contributors including Charles and Ray Eames, Buckminster Fuller, John Cage and Saul Bass amongst many others, who quickly came to be admirers of Corita, and keen supporters of the College and its activities. In her silkscreen prints she mixed contemporary advertising with slogans, poetry and song lyrics, commandeering nuns and students to help make ambitious installations, processions and banners. For Corita her choice of printmaking was deliberate, its very form explicitly democratic enabling a wide distribution which she enhanced further by rejecting limited editions, instead making large series of individual pieces and keeping prices inexpensive. For such an output her printmaking was limited to the two or three weeks between the end of summer school and the beginning of the new school year. This annual outpouring was the culmination of all she had absorbed the previous year — images, phrases, sounds and ideas — works born of relationships she forged between the disparate elements of society she encountered. Corita too has a direct connection to British Columbia having taught in the province during the early 1940s thereby making the exhibition even more appropriate given the time spent here during formative years. It was this period which in many ways shaped her thinking, focusing on the potential for creativity within us all linked to progressive social beliefs.

Her work and its community/participatory engagement marked a decade of utopian thinking but one rooted in the conviction that direct action can cause real change. As such she asserts the continuum between daily life and art through her work, and challenges our expectations of what and how we encounter art. This lack of division between form and activity makes for a compelling argument against the notion of detached art experience both for artists and the audience. As such it chimes with the Contemporary Art Gallery in our belief that art and its conventions should not be divorced from our everyday experience and have meaning to everyone.

This exhibition focuses exclusively on Corita's prints produced during the 1960s. Here we see a rapid visual move from a muted palette at the beginning of the decade to one where figurative style is replaced by an increasing use of large areas of intense



Opposite  
Corita Kent teaching (c. 1968)

Above  
**Corita Kent**  
*ha* (1966)  
Serigraph  
Photograph by Joshua White

abstract color. Words too find their way into her compositions often fragmented whereby they become image and the dominant compositional element. The size of the serigraphs also increases and for Corita the absorption of the burgeoning media signage, packaging, commercial systems and slogans she saw daily in Los Angeles play an important role in the development of her work. She embraced the urban environment, the commonplace becoming far from empty wasteland, rather a vehicle for hope and rejoicing. By her appropriation of the colors, design and advertising of the day, she situated her prints within a contemporary popular idiom, generating poetic work in which such visual communication is filled with social and human meaning. In *someday is now* (1964) for example, the partial block letters clearly derive from SAFEWAY supermarkets; *enriched bread* (1965) includes fragments from the red, blue and yellow of the packaging still used today by bread manufacturer Wonder, and





Above  
**Corita Kent**  
*Your Name* (1962)  
Serigraph  
Photograph by Joshua White

*somebody had to break the rules* (1967) has the phrase jumbled but taken from a laundry detergent of the day. Her use of a viewfinder to de-contextualize source material coupled with a technique of layering and ‘cut and paste’ collage — critical juxtaposition — create the conceptual methodology to generate new content.

Toward the end of the decade her work evolved to juxtapose song lyrics, poetry, advertising and theological criticism. The culture of protest entered too whereby she turned her attention to racism, poverty, feminism, military escalation in Vietnam — the burning political landscape of the time. These smaller scale prints incorporate documentary material taken from magazine publications such as *Life* and *Time*. Seen in pieces such as *news of the week* or *the cry that will be heard* (both 1969) her use of posters, formal innovations and the democratic social process that resulted in their mass production reached its critical peak. Corita titled this series ‘Heroes and Sheroes’, a crucial work being *phil and dan* (1969) consisting of a news photograph of Philip and Daniel Berrigan burning draft records in protest of US crimes in Vietnam. These two were part of the Catonsville Nine, a group of clergy and laypeople peace activists, Father Philip Berrigan achieving notoriety as the first Catholic priest in the history of the US to serve sentence as a political prisoner. The fluorescent colors of these prints recall the political graphics and psychedelic pop of that late 1960s period.

As with many other cultural figures Corita appeared to reach a point of activism exhaustion by the onset of the 1970s; at the end of the decade and at the height of her fame and prodigious work rate, she left the convent where she had spent her adult life. Her work shifted again returning to a more conversational and sentimental nature with simpler, cleaner form rather than the bold statement of the 1960s. In part due to her departure from the vibrancy and creativity which had surrounded her at Immaculate Heart College her move to Boston, New England also signaled a retreat from public participation to privacy.

## Thomas Bewick

*Tale-pieces*  
Alvin Balkind Gallery  
September 9 to October 30, 2011



Above  
**Thomas Bewick**  
Tailpiece from *Title* (17xx)  
Wood engraving

The Contemporary Art Gallery presents the first exhibition in North America devoted entirely to the vignettes of British wood engraver, artist and naturalist Thomas Bewick. The exhibition is a contemporary look into history, building a bridge between image making techniques and endeavors of different eras.

Born in Cherryburn, near Mickley, Northumberland in 1753, Bewick worked in Newcastle until his death in 1828. Clearly influenced by his childhood on a small farm on the banks of the river Tyne, the son of a tenant farmer and a collier, Bewick’s love of the countryside is reflected in his detailed woodcuts of animals, birds and rural scenes. The vignettes presented here were not originally made to be hung on gallery walls, but published in books about natural history. With his workshop partner, Ralph Beilby, Bewick produced three volumes, his most ambitious projects being illustrations for *General History of Quadrupeds* (1790) and *History of British Birds* (two volumes, *Land Birds*, 1797 and *Water Birds*, 1804). They presented each specimen by describing it in words and illustrating it with a printed image. In the time before photography such hand-made pictures served as scientific evidence. The grand idea of publishing the Quadrupeds and Birds was to give common people access to information, which until then was confined to the “libraries of the wealthy”.

Where there was empty space at the end of a paragraph or the bottom of a page, it was customary to fill it with some ornamental figure, a tailpiece. The ornament, or vignette, could also be placed in the beginning of the paragraph, as a headpiece. These would often depict leaves and foliage, from which the word ‘vignette’ (French *vigne*, vine) is derived, or small decorative objects like oil lamps.



Cut into the end-grain of blocks of box-wood, an exceptionally close-grained hard wood, Bewick’s tale-pieces are necessarily small in size, making us even more aware of the extraordinary skill involved in their production. Bewick recast the art of the tailpiece through his depictions of everyday life in his native Tyne valley. Each represents a part of the world on paper in miniature: it can be a whole landscape with the horizon in the distance, a group of people or a lonely figure in a story. The image is not bound by a frame but integrates with the space of the page.



Thomas Bewick (1753–1828) was a celebrated wood engraver, artist, and naturalist. At the age of fourteen he began a seven-year apprenticeship with an engraving business owned by Ralph Beilby in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. His talent was soon apparent and he began working on book illustrations for publications such as *Tommy Trip's History of Beasts and Birds*, *Fables by the Late Mr. Gay* and *Select Fables for Thomas Saint*, a Newcastle printer. In 1790 Bewick published *General History of Quadrupeds*, and as a result of its success went on to publish two volumes of *History of British Birds*.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with texts by Nigel Tattersfield, Jenny Uglow and Tom Lubbock, hardcover, priced at \$45. Please contact CAG reception for details.

Also available is a limited edition printed on a hand press by Iain Bain from the original woodblocks, priced at \$150. Edition of 75, 300 x 240mm, sold in a hinged mount, unframed. Of the three subjects, the Bulldog was engraved for the 1790 edition of the *Quadrupeds*; the Lesser Redpole, and the tail-piece of the man relieving himself beside a fragment of ruined wall were made for the first 1797 volume of the *British Birds*. For more information please contact CAG reception.

All works courtesy of Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.



Above  
**Thomas Bewick**  
Tailpiece from *Title* (17xx)  
Wood engraving

Bewick referred to these as ‘tale-pieces’. Intended as illustrations of “some truth or point of some moral” they provide an invaluable insight into social history while also demonstrating the artist’s imagination and wit. However the tailpieces were marginal in a number of ways: they were executed as an alternative to the day job, and in his books they were fitted around the main content. In contrast to the more systematic, encyclopedic natural histories, with vignettes Bewick was free to develop his own tales the way he wanted them.

As such these narrative works provide an interesting counterpoint to the work of many internationally established artists in Vancouver, engaged in image making that critically examines and reflects on the city and socio-economic conditions which surround them. The presentation of historical work, a first at the CAG, is intended to challenge our understanding of what a contemporary art space should show and as such reinforces the notion that everything was once contemporary, retaining meaning for future generations, just as much as what is contemporary now will inevitably become historical.

Subject to Bewick’s more psychological and sociological scrutiny his images frequently reveal human frailties; one depicts a horse stopping on the bank of a river to avoid falling into the water, while his rider is oblivious. A dog is also present and aware of the imminent danger. An interpretation, written later by his daughter Jane, sums up the artist’s general attitude: “Instinct teaches these two dumb animals to walk wisely — churches and sign-boards do not avail in teaching men to keep in the right path”. Bewick’s sympathy was on the side of the underprivileged. Many vignettes depict people coping with different situations, often travelling, working, crossing rivers and other obstacles on their way. Bewick’s resentment of human cruelty towards animals and people is clear, signified by the many hanged figures in his works.

Mortality is a subject to which Bewick often returns both as an individual destiny but, through motifs such as military uniforms and memorials, also making wider connections. In one poignant vignette he shows us children dressed in tall hats, holding swords aloft, riding gravestones like hobby-horses. One of his last wood engravings, this time on a larger scale, was entitled *Waiting for Death*. Bewick depicts an old emaciated horse, weary and exhausted from past labor, standing motionless against the familiar landscape, exposed to the cruel elements and resigned to its fate in the natural order of things.

One tale-piece in particular attracts interest amongst artists today. It features a small scene with a house and figure on horseback almost totally obscured by the artist’s engraved thumb-print. With this unprecedented gesture Bewick asserts his authorship at the expense of a carefully wrought image.



Above  
**Thomas Bewick**  
Tailpiece from *Title* (17xx)  
Wood engraving



# Federico Herrero

*Vibrantes*  
Window Spaces  
September 9, 2011 to January 15, 2012

The Contemporary Art Gallery presents a major new commission by Costa Rican artist Federico Herrero. *Vibrantes* will evolve over a period of time from the beginning of September revealing the performative aspect of Herrero’s practice while working in the public realm, such unconventional locations and surfaces typically providing a context for his large-scale abstract murals. While Herrero at times also produces more usual gallery exhibitions, his works are primarily site-specific and more commonly made outside as part of a cityscape. For example, in 2007 in Medellin, Colombia, Herrero painted the cement pillars raising the subway tracks over the city’s central park, covering the uniformly drab surface in bright flat planes of blue, which acted as the background for his characteristic layering of colourful geometric shapes.

Herrero often seeks out difficult sites — the horizontal expanse of an exposed rooftop, the cracks in concrete pathways, the exposed bottom of a swimming pool or the brutalist structure of the Central Library in Portsmouth, UK. Most recently he painted the exteriors of four fishing huts on the Rhine, solid monochromatic planes juxtaposed with dense clusters of multi-coloured organic forms. While his colour palette makes the huts stand out in contrast to the landscape, it is his distinctive compositions that are transformative. The murals seem to physically alter the positions of the huts — the formal compositions seeming to dislodge the structures creating the illusion that they are somehow flowing with the river. The static forms are vibrant with the energy of Herrero’s configurations of vivid colours. The architecture vibrates, moving like the landscape, endlessly changing.

The new piece for the Contemporary Art Gallery shares its title with this intervention, for Herrero the word being transferable from one project to another signalling an ongoing commonality, functioning to both describe and name, but also modifying into a verb, evoking his process. Herrero builds his paintings slowly, a basic plan in place but the final form undetermined, choice of colour, the space it occupies and the geometry left to improvisatory decisions. He relies on the mutability of the medium as well as the unfamiliarity of the surface to keep his actions in the present.

For *Vibrantes* at the CAG, Herrero shifts mediums. Akin to Matisse and his late paper cutouts, Herrero uses sheets of coloured adhesive vinyl instead of paint, progressively developing the work across our building’s façade of windows and doors. Glass becomes the field for an array of layered forms, accumulating in density and amalgamating into a cohesive composition. However even after he has finished the piece, it will constantly shift in intensity, opacity and saturation as clouds roll in or sun moves across the panes. And once the seasons change

**Federico Herrero**  
*Paisaje* (2007)  
Parque Berrio, Bienal de Medellin MDE007  
Colombia



and the days darken, the interior lights will affect the colours and complexity of forms. At times their brightness will mute the vinyl palette and hide the multiplicity of shapes. The vibrancy at times may be dimmed, but the work will still pulse with the energy of its environment.

Paradoxically, this flux is key to Herrero’s work. Through form, colour and context, the artist directly addresses the division between art and life, attempting to challenge the notion that art is a specialized commodity. Here the CAG’s façade acts as both a metaphor and connector — a vibrant conduit bridging inside and out, a membrane extending exhibitions into the street, directly addressing the gallery’s location and physical presence in Vancouver — at the base of a generic condo high-rise on the corner of an intersection with three other similar buildings. The uniformity of the environment functions like a well patterned camouflage — a concern for a public institution that wants to be seen — a broader civic problem as Vancouver’s skyline and downtown streetscape become indistinct, the city already commonly used by the film and television industries as a stand-in for others. *Vibrantes* offers a temporary reprieve, inserting a unique signature into Vancouver, the work’s changeability suggestive of a variety of extraordinary futures for a city that is still growing.

Confronting these propositions further and moving beyond the gallery itself, Herrero will also participate in the gallery’s off-site programme. Working with Autobox Media and consultant Hannah Hughes, the Contemporary Art Gallery has designed a program, using Layar Reality Browser that Herrero will use to build virtual murals on selected sites throughout Vancouver. The artwork will be accessible through most smartphones and will be launched in late autumn.

Federico Herrero (b. 1978) is based in San José, Costa Rica. Recent solo exhibitions include *Federico Herrero – Aurora*, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen, Denmark (2010); *Amalgama*, Galeria Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid and Amansalba, Teoretica, San José (both 2009); and *Colorigami*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo (2008). Selected group exhibitions include *Panamericana*, Kurimanzutto Gallery, Mexico, and *Modelos para armar — Pensar latinoamerica desde la colección MUSAC*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain (both 2010); *Fare Mundi/Nuevos Mundos*, Latin American Pavillion, 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale (2009); and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2007). Herrero was the recipient of a prestigious best young artist award at the Venice Biennale in 2001. In 2008, Kunstverein Freiburg published a monograph on Herrero, including texts by Paulo Herkenhoff and Felicity Lunn. He is represented by Sies + Höke Galerie in Düsseldorf, Germany.

This program is generously supported by TELUS, 2010 Legacies Now and the Canadian Art Foundation.



Public events

Exhibitions Opening  
Thursday September 8, 6–9pm  
Join us to celebrate the opening of our new exhibitions.

Fortieth Birthday Bash  
Thursday September 8, 9–11pm  
Stay late and celebrate the CAG's fortieth birthday with live performance, music and entertainment. Activities and birthday celebrations created in collaboration with Collage Collage.

CAG Birthday and Family Day  
Saturday September 10, 1–4pm  
Join us for family activities and create your own Corita screen print on T-shirts, bags, banners and boxes or rubber stamped artwork. The workshop will be followed by a birthday procession through the Yaletown neighbourhood.

Federico Herrero, Artist Talk  
Monday September 12, 4.30pm  
Emily Carr University of Art & Design, 1399 Johnston Street, Granville Island, South Building, Room 410  
Places are free

Corita Kent Film Screenings  
Free screenings of films about Corita's life and work;  
Thursday September 15, 7 pm  
Sister Corita: Mary's Day (1964) and We Have No Art (1967) by Baylis Glascock.  
Thursday October 27, 7 pm  
Become a Microscope: 90 Statements on Sister Corita (2009), a documentary by Aaron Rose.

Peter Culley on Thomas Bewick  
Saturday, October 15, 3 pm  
Places are free  
Peter Culley provides a personal guide to the Thomas Bewick exhibition. Culley is a writer and poet currently living in Nanaimo, British Columbia. His blog in pictures and text reveals his ongoing reflections on and concern with the environment in which he lives and works.

Wood engraving demonstration by Shinisuke Minegishi  
Saturday, October 22, 3pm  
Shinsuke Minegishi will give a demonstration of wood engraving, the relief printing process used by Thomas Bewick. Come and see the tools, materials and processes of this eighteenth century technique as practiced by a contemporary artist. Presented in collaboration with Malaspina Printmakers.



Mary's Day Free World, c. 1962

Cover image  
Corita with student, Immaculate Heart College, c. 1957

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Open Wednesday to Sunday 12 to 6pm  
Free entry

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Free Guided Visits  
Guided visits are free and open to the public, providing an excellent opportunity to engage with exhibitions and develop new skills for interpreting contemporary art.

Saturday September 17, 3pm  
Led by our volunteers with Gallery Coordinator, Jill Henderson

Saturday September 24, 3pm  
Guided visit of exhibition Federico Herrero, *Vibrantes*, led by Curator, Jenifer Papararo

Saturday, October 1, 3pm  
Guided visit of exhibition Corita Kent, *To create is to relate* led by our Executive Director, Nigel Prince

Saturday, October 8, 3pm  
Guided visit of exhibition Thomas Bewick, *Tale-pieces*, led by our Executive Director, Nigel Prince

Saturday, October 29, 3pm  
Guided visit in French led by our volunteer Patricia Huijnen

Sunday October 30, 3pm  
Led by our volunteers with Gallery Coordinator, Jill Henderson

We also encourage visits from primary and secondary schools, ESL groups, university and college students and community groups. For more information or to book a guided visit for your group, please email info@contemporaryartgallery.ca or telephone 604.681.2700.





