

FRIDA KAHLO Artist Bio

1907 – 1954

FRIDA KAHLO was a twentieth century artist who expressed great pride in the spirit and culture of the ancient Indian people of Mexico through her artwork. Frida created 151 paintings during her career, and 55 of these were SELF PORTRAITS. Frida's paintings were rich with symbols that represented her own physical and emotional experiences as well as her cultural heritage.

Frida's father was German and her mother's parents were native Mexican and of Spanish descent. Frida, whose name means "peace" in German, was born on July 6, 1907 in a small village near Mexico City named Coyoacan. She grew up in a beautiful blue house that her father built called the CASA AZUL. Today this house is a museum to Frida with much of her collection of Pre-Columbian art, her work, and her collection of native dress and artifacts. As a child, Frida was high spirited and loved to go on walks with her father. They collected shells, stones, plants and other natural objects and brought them home to study under a microscope. She and her father shared a love for nature, animals, plants, birds, insects, etc. Many of these things from nature appear in Frida's paintings.

As a young child Frida had polio, which made her right leg smaller than her left leg. Some children teased her by calling her peg leg Frida. Frida was one of the first girls admitted to the National Preparatory School in Mexico City. When she attended school, she enjoyed art, but thought that she wanted to be a doctor. As a student she joined political marches to protest the government's poor treatment of the native Mexican Indians.

Frida was in a tragic bus accident in 1925 when she was only eighteen years old. Most of her bones were broken and a rod from the bus pierced her lower body. It was a miracle that she lived through all the operations and the painful ordeal of recovery. She was bed-ridden for a year and during that time her mother had a special easel built so that Frida could paint while sitting in her bed. Her father, who was a photographer and painted as a hobby, lent her his oil paints. After her accident, art became Frida's means

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of expressing her feelings about herself, the pain she endured, her love of nature and the people of Mexico.

After she recovered from her accident, Frida took her paintings to show to DIEGO RIVERA, a famous muralist who she had met before her accident. He climbed down from the scaffolding and was so impressed with Frida's work that he asked to visit at her home. They fell in love and were married August 21, 1929. Her husband Diego's reputation as a famous muralist spread, so he and Frida traveled to the United States, where Diego painted large murals in San Francisco, Detroit and New York. Their marriage was stormy and at one point they broke up, but later remarried. Frida's physical health deteriorated, but she continued to paint and her work always reflected her heritage, the intense emotions that she experienced as Diego's wife, and the agony of her constant physical pain and inability to have children.

Andre Breton, a French artist who wrote the Surrealist Manifesto, called Frida Kahlo a great SURREALIST painter. However, Frida disagreed and said that she only painted "her reality" and the way she saw herself and the world. Frida's paintings are rich with symbolism and depict her physical and emotional pain and personal experiences.

In her later years when she was again bedridden, Frida surrounded herself with colorful Mexican decorations and the artifacts she had collected throughout her life. In 1953 she was given her first solo exhibition in Mexico. The doctors told her she was not well enough to attend the opening, but she ordered her four poster bed to be moved to the gallery and went to the opening in an ambulance. She greeted fans at the gallery from her four poster bed!

Frida's last paintings were STILL LIFES that celebrated her love of all natural things. Frida died at the age of 47 on July 13, 1954 Her last painting was entitled, "Long Live Life" and depicted ripe red watermelons, sliced and unsliced, against a blue sky. It was her ultimate triumph over a life of pain.

Bibliography

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