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FRIDA KAHLO DIEGO RIVERA & MEXICAN MODERNISM

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

FRIDA KAHLO



Frida Kahlo (July 6, 1907 – July 13, 1954) was a Mexican artist known for her self-portraits. Around the age of 18, Frida was severely injured in a terrible bus accident, and it was during her recovery that she started painting, although this was not the first art form she practiced.

Her paintings blend her pain and struggles with the vibrant colors and motifs of Mexican popular culture. Life was not kind to Frida. At the age of six she contracted polio, a condition that made one of her legs shorter and thinner than the other. She was bullied by her peers, and the disease isolated her for long periods of time. During a bus accident, she suffered multiple fractures of her spine, foot, pelvis, collarbone, ribs, and her shoulder was dislocated. She nearly lost her life, and needed over 30 surgeries.

The atmosphere in her parents' house was also very tense, and Kahlo was closer to her father than her mother. Her father, Guillermo influenced her artistic career. He was a photographer and Frida helped him in his studio. But her relationship with her mother was strained and tense. As if all this was not enough, Kahlo had a turbulent marriage, and her pregnancies ended with miscarriages with life threatening hemorrhages that kept her in the hospital for weeks.

In her early twenties, she married Diego Rivera in spite of her mother's disapproval. Diego was 20 years older than Frida, but her father thought the marriage would be a good deal. Rivera was one of Mexico's most successful artists, a notable figure in the Mexican Communist Party and he could easily financially support Frida as she was often in need of expensive medical treatment.

Diego's womanizer reputation preceded him, but Frida still loved him even though he was unfaithful. She eventually stopped being so fond of him after finding out that Rivera had an affair with her younger sister.

Kahlo contracted gangrene and had her right leg amputated at the knee. She struggled with severe depression that led to heavy drinking. Still, displaying raw emotion through art helped her cope with her condition more than anything else. Frida managed to turn excruciating pain into beauty and her passion stands out in every single one of her paintings — making her an appreciated and celebrated artist all over the world.

Nickolas Muray, *Frida with a Blue Satin Blouse*, 1939. Carbon print; 17.7 x 14.2 in. The Vergel Foundation and MondoMostre in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBAL). Photo by Nickolas Muray; © Nickolas Muray Photo Archives. Digital image by Gerardo Suter