

MUSEUM web quest

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FRIDA KAHLO DIEGO RIVERA & MEXICAN MODERNISM

THE JACQUES AND NATASHA GELMAN COLLECTION

DENVER
art
MUSEUM

ELEMENTARY
FOCUS

FACILITATOR
GUIDE

WEARABLE ART

TOPIC:

Identify different ways Frida Kahlo celebrated her identity in what she wore and connect to kids' personal identities.

RATIONALE:

By learning about the motivations and personal lives of artists and identifying similarities from their own lives, kids develop a personal connection and build empathy.

RESOURCES INCLUDE:

FOR FACILITATORS:

- A How-to facilitate guide including information about the intentional construction of Frida Kahlo's public persona, directions and sample prompting conversation questions. Guide includes complementary links for background research, and an inspiration video demonstrating the creation of the wearable art project.
- High resolution images of the artwork
- Supplementary example images of fashion, jewelry and cultural styles referenced in the exhibition
- One student worksheet
- Instructions for kids

FOR KIDS:

- Instructions for kids



Frida Kahlo, *Diego on my Mind*, 1943. Oil on Masonite; 29.9 x 24 in. (76 x 61 cm). The Vergel Foundation and MondoMostre in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBAL). © 2020 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo by Gerardo Suter.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGE

Share this image of Frida Kahlo with the kids. This is a painting by Frida Kahlo called *Diego on my Mind*. Kahlo wears a headdress of flowers from Oaxaca, a city in Mexico known for its celebration of indigenous culture. Dressed as a traditional "Tehuana", Kahlo's head and upper body is covered in the customary clothing of a Tehuantepec woman. With this painting, Kahlo celebrates the rich cultural history of Mexico. Kahlo used clothing to construct her ethnic and political identity and was proud and honored to have Indigenous Mexican roots. Kahlo put so much of herself in her practice and in a sense, she was her art.

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DIG DEEPER *(helpful links)*

 [Frida's Style](#)

Here are some visual images of the examples below that you can share as kids respond:

ADDITIONAL VISUALS

Drawing from traditional hairstyles of Mexico, Frida Kahlo braided her hair with woven ribbons and flowers that added a sculptural element to her look.

Frida Kahlo had a mixed heritage: Her father was German-Hungarian and her mother was Spanish and Indigenous Tehuana from Oaxaca, Mexico. Kahlo created a blended look through the items she wore to reclaim some of her various cultural heritages.

She wore colorful fringed scarves or shawls known as rebozos and Oaxacan traditional dresses that connected to her Indigenous heritage.

Frida Kahlo could be seen wearing a contemporary-cut blouse and jewelry in the pre-Hispanic (prior to Spanish conquest) and Spanish colonial tradition, respectively.

Sometimes she would pair Spanish colonial jewelry with traditional Indigenous huipil blouses or Chanel haute couture (high fashion) with her Indigenous jadeite necklace.

Kahlo's distinctive dress was a proud assertion of her national identity and served a dual purpose. Her fashion choices also effectively concealed her body and focusing attention on her head and shoulders. The last thing you would be thinking of when you saw her were her disabilities. The boxy huipil blouses were made without fastenings, and could drop loosely over a back brace or plaster cast. Their short length was well suited to working while seated, whether in a chair, bed or wheelchair. The long flowing skirts covered her leg damaged by Polio, and their motion helped conceal her limp.



CONVERSATION QUESTIONS:

- Can you name an item Frida Kahlo is wearing that might give insight into her identity?
- Why do you think it was important to Kahlo to wear these items?
- What clothes, accessories, or other items do you choose to wear that express who you are?
- In her lifetime, having a disability might not have been socially accepted, do you think anything has changed now? How can we build understanding that having a disability is not negative, but just another attribute that make people who they are?

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MAKE WEARABLE ART

Frida Kahlo's selection of dress, makeup, hairstyle, and jewelry are an extension of her art. One way to express who you are—your identity—is through what you wear. Frida Kahlo wore a distinctive and vibrant wardrobe tied closely to her identity, both culturally and artistically. She made her own wearable art, often drawing on her Indigenous traditions. She used materials like flowers, paper, and cloth to create things she could wear. What some might interpret as cultural appropriation others understand as reclaiming her Indigenous heritage. (Cultural appropriation is the inappropriate adoption of another culture's customs, practices, and ideas.) Kahlo presents different versions of herself by celebrating the multitude of Mexico's cultural histories. Kahlo's heritage includes Indigenous roots from Santo Domingo Tehuantepec, Mexico. However, in her fashion she combined traditional elements from numerous cultures— including Indigenous people from several places in Mexico and Guatemala, the Olmec who occupied the tropical lowlands of the modern-day Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco, and the Oaxaca traditions, which include several different groups of Indigenous peoples: Zapotec, Nahuatl, and Mixtec tribes, each with distinctive textile traditions.

How can you show multiple aspects of your identity and cultural heritages in the things that you wear?

What are ways to make wearable art that might express who you are?

VIDEO LINK



Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) in a hammock, 1948, Bridgeman Images

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MAKE WEARABLE

ART

MATERIALS:

Anything you wish; here are some ideas.

Paper

Ribbon

Markers

Tin foil

Duct tape or colored tape

Items from nature

Paper clips

Cardboard

flowers, leaves, pine cones, etc.

🎯🎯🎯🎯 YOUR TURN!

1. Make a list of the elements that contribute to who you are as a person. What are your family roots or history? Are there cultural or family traditions that have shaped your identity? What other elements make you unique? What are your interests and hobbies? Brainstorm how you might represent these aspects of your identity by making some sketches.
2. There are traditional techniques that Mexicans have used for many years to make art. Many Indigenous groups continue to make handmade crafts to celebrate their history and culture. Explore some examples of handmade crafts made by Mexican artisans today.
3. Using these sketches, transform your ideas into something you could wear. Try combining at least two of your sketches in an interesting way. Think about a favorite accessory you like to wear (jewelry, tie, belt, shirt, watch, hair accessory) and how it could incorporate one of these ideas.
4. Choose materials to craft your accessory.
5. Assemble your accessory with items you find around home or school.
6. Model your accessory for the group and share with them how this expresses different parts of your identity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What does your creation say about you?

What did you notice about expressing multiple parts of your identity at once?

Why do you think self-expression through what you wear might be important?

Based on your experience making your own wearable art, how do you think Frida Kahlo might have felt about expressing multiple parts of her identity through her appearance?