

Kahlo

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ISBN: 978-178160-853-1

*'I paint my own reality. The only thing I know is that I paint because I need to, and I paint whatever passes through my head without any other consideration.'*

Frida Kahlo

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Frida Kahlo

# Biography

1907 : Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo is born July 6, in la Casa Azul in Coyoacán, Mexico, daughter of a German, Wilhelm Kahlo, and Mathilde Calderón.

1910 : Beginning of the Mexican revolution which overthrows Porfirio Diaz. Kahlo adopted this year as that of her birthday, in line with a new Mexico. Considered an accessory by her father who thought of her as a substitute for a son, she became his assistant in his photograph studio.

1916 : Polio leaves her right leg handicapped.

1921 : The Mexican government orders a large mural from Diego Rivera - returned to the country after fourteen years spent in Europe - to be sent to the National Preparatory School.

1923 : Frida Kahlo enters the National Preparatory School, reserved for the Mexican elite. She is one of thirty-five girls in an enrollment of two thousand pupils. She secretly admires Diego Rivera's painting *La Création*.

1925 : Frida Kahlo suffers a very serious accident. The bus carrying her is involved in a collision with a tramway. She suffers numerous fractures and internal lesions. She must remain confined to her bed, and begins to paint. Through painting, she expresses the struggle of her existence.

1928 : Frida becomes a member of the Mexican Communist Party. She meets Diego Rivera.

1929 : Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera marry August 21.

1930 : Frida Kahlo has a miscarriage in Detroit where Diego Rivera is making a fresco for the Institute of Art before working at the Rockefeller Center in New York. In September, her mother dies.

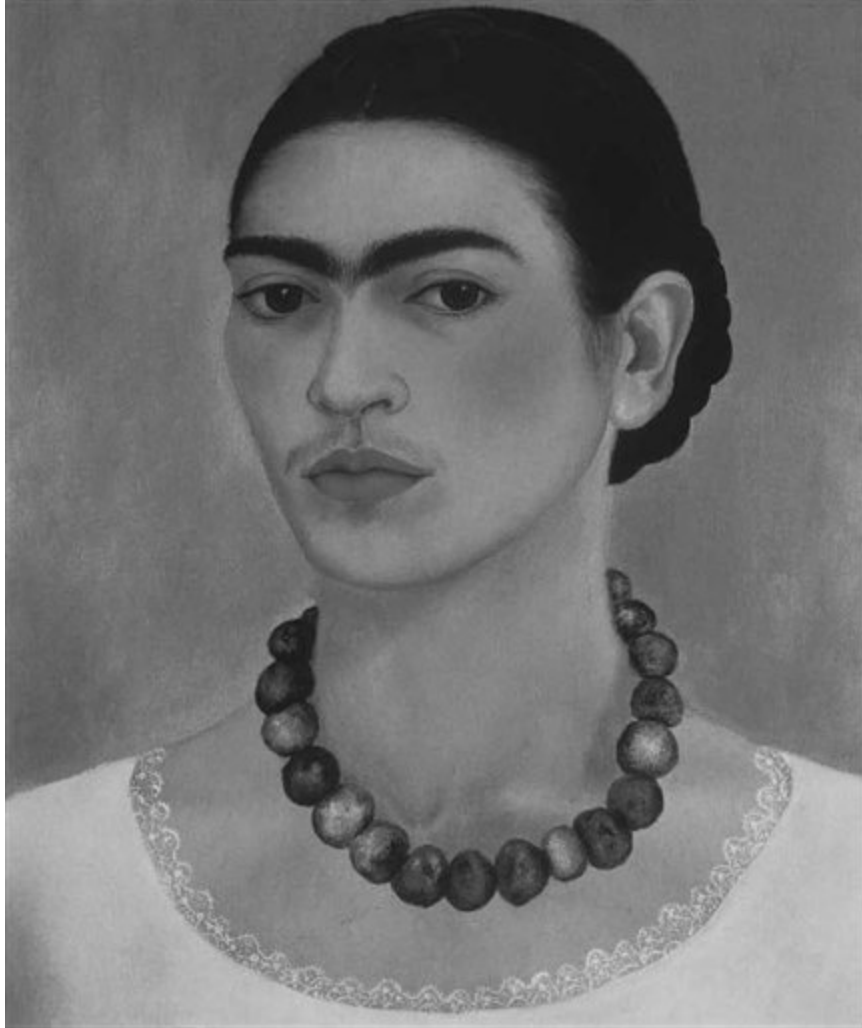
1934 : The couple returns to Mexico. Diego begins his relationship with Cristina, Frida's sister. Tired of her husband's attitude, Frida Kahlo moves out and takes Isamu Nogushi as a lover.

1937 : Trotsky and his wife take refuge in Mexico and are welcomed at the Casa Azul. The Russian revolutionary has an affair with Frida Kahlo.

1938 : André Breton comes to Mexico. The three couples have long discussions about politics and culture. Frida Kahlo has her first exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York: she is able to begin to sell her paintings. She enters into an affair with the photographer Nickolas Muray.

1939 : The surrealists dedicate an exposition to her. Diego and Frida divorce in November.





*Self-Portrait with Necklace, 1933*

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Oil on metal, 34.5 x 29.5 cm  
Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection,  
Mexico City

1940 : Frida undergoes medical treatment in San Francisco with the help of Dr Eloesser. In August, Diego and Frida remarry.

1941 : Her father dies. The couple move into Casa Azul.

1943 : Frida becomes a professor at the "Esmeralda" art school. She soon teaches at her home due to health problems.

1946 : She receives the national painting prize for her *Moses*.

1950 : Her health worsens. She is subjected to nine operations for the spine.

1953 : For the first time in Mexico, an exhibition is dedicated to her courtesy of Cola Alvarez Bravo.

1954 : She participates for the last time in a demonstration for peace in Guatemala. Frida Kahlo dies July 13.

1959 : After the death of Diego Rivera in 1957, and conforming to his wishes, the Frida Kahlo Museum opens in Casa Azul.



The painter and the person are one and inseparable and yet she wore many masks. With intimates, Frida dominated any room with her witty, brash commentary, her singular identification with the peasants of Mexico and yet her distance from them, her taunting of the Europeans and their posturing beneath banners: Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Expressionists, Surrealists, Social Realists, etc. in search of money and rich patrons, or a seat in the academies.



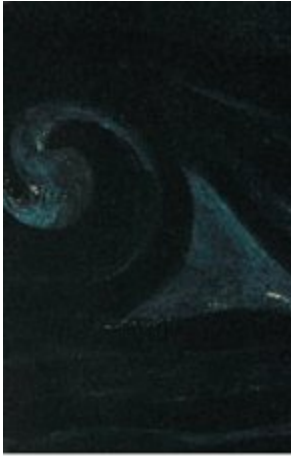
Frida Kahlo at the age of 18

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1926

Photograph of Guillermo Kahlo





And yet, as her work matured, she desired recognition for herself and those paintings once given away as keepsakes. What had begun as a pastime quickly usurped her life.

Her internal life caromed between exuberance and despair as she battled almost constant pain from injuries to her spine, back, right foot, right leg, fungal diseases, many abortions, viruses and the continuing experimental ministrations of her doctors.

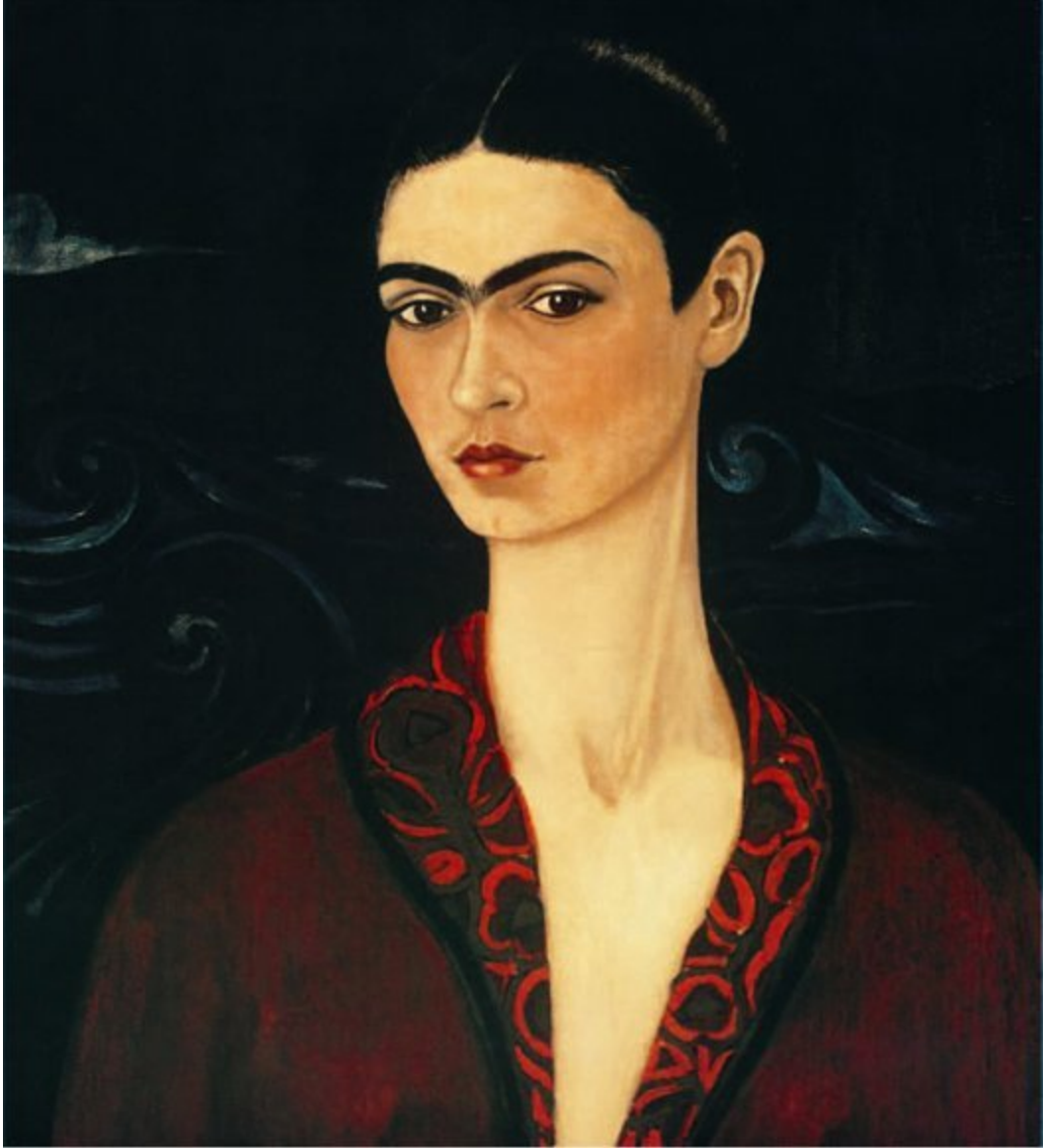


Self-Portrait with Velvet Dress

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1926

Oil on canvas, 79.7 x 60 cm  
Bequest of Alejandro Gómez Arias





The singular consistent joy in her life was Diego Rivera, her husband. She endured his infidelities and countered with affairs of her own on three continents, consorting with both strong men and desirable women. But in the end, Diego and Frida always came back to each other.



## The Accident

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1926

Crayon on paper, 20 x 27 cm  
Coronel Collection, Cuernavaca,  
Morelos



17 de Septiembre de 1926 - FRIDA Kahlo (Accidente)



Diego stood by her at the end, as did a Mexico slow to realise the value of its treasure. Denied singular recognition by her native land until the last years of her life, Frida Kahlo's only one-person show in Mexico opened where her life began.

Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderon was born on July 6, 1907 in Coyoacan, Mexico.



Pancho Villa and Adelita

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c.1927

Oil on canvas, 65 x 45 cm  
Museo del Instituto Tlaxcala de  
Cultura, Tlaxcala





Her mother, the former Matilde Calderon, a devout Catholic and a *mestiza* of mixed Indian and European lineage, held deeply conservative and religious views of a woman's place in the world. On the other hand, Frida's father was an artist, a photographer of some note who pushed her to think for herself. Amidst all the traditional domesticity, he fastened onto Frida as a surrogate son who would follow his steps into the creative arts.



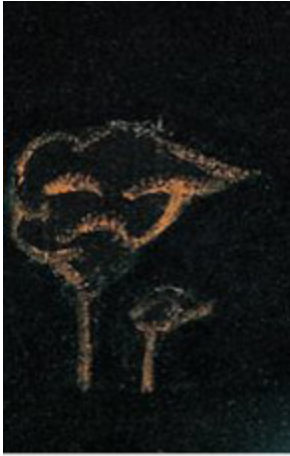
Portrait of Miguel N. Lira

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1927

Oil on canvas, 99.2 x 67.5 cm  
Museo del Instituto Tlaxcala de  
Cultura, Tlaxcala





He became her very first mentor to set her aside from traditional roles accepted by the majority of Mexican women. She became his photographic assistant and began to learn the trade. Frida Kahlo was spoiled, indulged and impressionable. In 1922, to assure her a better than average education, she was also entered into the free National Preparatory School in San Ildefonso.



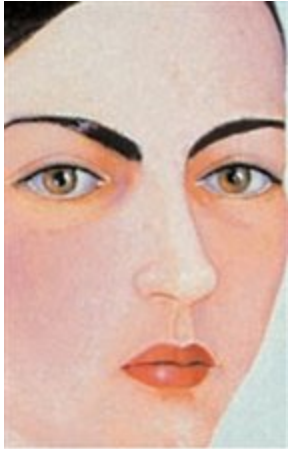
Portrait of Alicia Galant

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1927

Oil on canvas, 107 x 93.5 cm  
Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño,  
Mexico City





She devoured her new freedom from mind-numbing domestic chores and hung out with a number of cliques within the school's social structure. She found a real sense of belonging with the *Cachuchas* gang of intellectual bohemians - named after the type of hat they wore. Leading this motley elitist mob was Alejandro Gomez Arias, who reiterated in countless speeches that a new enlightenment for Mexico required "optimism, sacrifice, love, joy" and bold leadership.

### Portrait of My Sister Cristina

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1928

Oil on wood, 99 x 81.5 cm  
Collection Otto Atencio Troconis,  
Caracas





She remained a committed and vocal Communist for the rest of her life. The atmosphere in Mexico City was alive with political debate and danger, as volatile speakers stepped forward to challenge whatever regime claimed power only to be gunned down in the street, or absorbed into the corruption. Diaz fell to Madero who lasted 13 months until he stopped a lethal load of bullets from his general Victoriano Huerta.



Portrait of Alejandro Gómez Arias

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1928

Oil on canvas, Bequest of  
Alejandro Gómez Arias,  
Mexico City