

# Frida KAHLO

(1907 - 1954)

Frida Kahlo de Rivera was a Mexican artist best known for her self-portraits. Her paintings are strongly influenced by Mexican folk culture, and use lots of bright colours and dramatic symbolism.

## Frida's Childhood

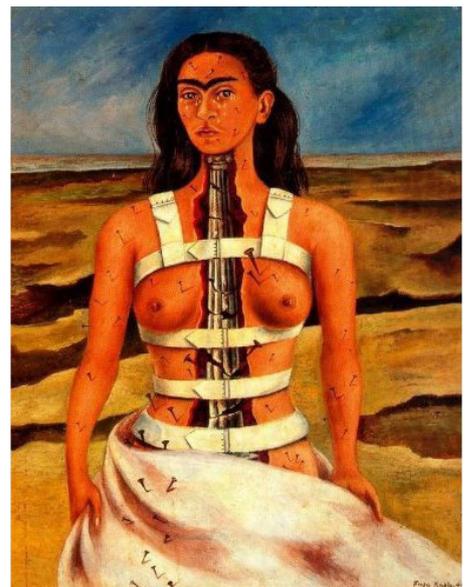
Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, Mexico on July 6, 1907. She grew up in a house called La Casa Azul (the Blue House) with her parents and 6 sisters. Her father was of German ancestry and her mother was Amerindian. Frida's house La Casa Azul is now a museum.

As a child, Frida loved to draw, and she often preferred to spend time alone than playing with her sisters. At the age of 6, Frida caught a disease called polio, which damaged her right leg.

## Why did Kahlo become a painter?

Eighteen-year-old Frida was originally training in medicine but an accident caused her to change her career direction. The bus she was riding in collided with a trolley-cart, leaving her collar bone, spine, pelvis, abdomen, and right leg badly damaged and crushed.

Following the accident, Frida had to stay in bed for three months to recover. Even after the initial recovery, she suffered great periods of pain which left her bedridden for months at a time. Overall, she underwent thirty-five operations.



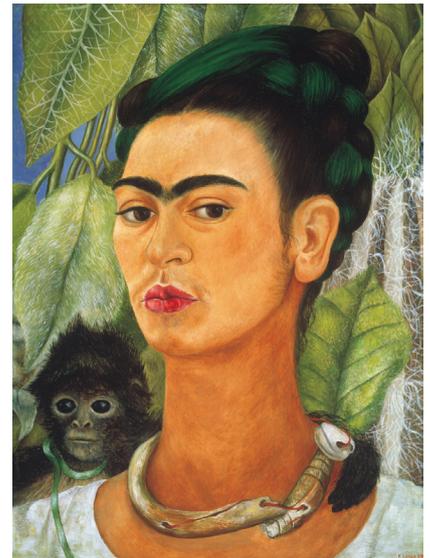
'The Broken Column', 1944



Frida took up painting as a way to occupy her time while she was recovering in bed, and also to express the pain she was feeling. Her mother had a special easel made for her so she could paint in bed, and her father lent her his box of oil paints and some brushes.

### What did Kahlo Paint?

Frida often painted portraits of herself. She wanted to show people about her suffering, her inability to have children, and also the people in her life. She created one hundred and forty three paintings, and of these, fifty-five are self-portraits.



'Self Portrait with Monkey', 1938

Her self-portraits reflect the mental and physical wounds caused by the accident. For example, her self-portrait titled 'A Broken Column' (1944) shows how trapped she felt by her own body. Her loneliness is shown by the empty landscape behind her. The small flimsy pins show the pain that her wounds gave her.

modest. At that time it was felt that if you strained your mind by doing too much maths, you would become physically strained, and that if you were physically weak that meant you were mentally weak too.

### Kahlo's Painting Style

Frida was proud of her Mexican heritage. She was inspired by traditional Mexican art which is wonderfully colourful, bright, patterned, symbolic art. It is full of feathers, flowers, dancing, music, and texture.

She often featured animals in her self-portraits, such as monkeys, parrots, a hairless dog, and a deer. The 'Self Portrait with Monkey' (1938) shows Frida standing in front of trees and leaves wearing a traditional Mexican blouse and necklace, along with an elaborate hairstyle that also reflects her heritage.

Frida played an important role in helping to revive traditional Mexican culture, and even changed her birth year to 1910, three years after her actual birth in 1907, to coincide with the start of the Mexican Revolution.



### Kahlo's Influence and Legacy

Frida's work has inspired artists to reveal their emotions, inner-turmoil, fantasies, and view-points, no matter how extreme. She is also viewed as the people's painter because she endured a great struggle and she fought through it.

Frida was a strong woman who overcame her predicament and did what she was best at despite severe pain and hardship. Today, people visit her home in Mexico to see where her great art was created and to appreciate what a single person can accomplish against all the odds.



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