

The Smithsonian Associates
 Afternoon Lecture/Seminar
 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Dr. Nancy G. Heller
 Thursday, July 27, 2023
 [presented on Zoom]

FRIDA KAHLO: Her Art and Life

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Marie-Pierre Colle and Guadalupe Rivera, *Frida's Fiestas: Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo* (Potter, 1994)
 Pete Hamill, *Diego Rivera* (Abrams, 1999)
 Hayden Herrera, *Frida Kahlo: A Biography* (HarperCollins, 1983)
 Frida Kahlo, *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*, introduction by Carlos Fuentes (Abrams, 2005)
 Margaret A. Lindauer, *Devouring Frida: Art History and Popular Culture* (Wesleyan University Press, 1999)
 Claire Wilcox, *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up* (Prestel, 2019)
 Martha Zamora (ed.), *Cartas Apasionadas: The Letters of Frida Kahlo* (Chronicle Books, 1995)
 Adriana Zavala, *Frida Kahlo's Garden* (Prestel, 2015)

BASIC CHRONOLOGY:

- July 6, 1907—Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, a suburb of Mexico City.
 1913—Frida contracts polio; her right leg is permanently affected.
 1922—Kahlo meets Diego Rivera at the National Preparatory School, where she is a student and he is painting a mural.
 1925—Kahlo is grievously injured in a bus accident; despite myriad surgeries she lives the rest of her life in pain.
 August 21, 1929—Kahlo and Rivera marry. The couple travel to San Francisco, Detroit, and NYC for his work.
 1938--Kahlo has her first one-person exhibition, at the Julian Levy Gallery in NYC.
 1939—Kahlo and Rivera divorce.
 1940—Kahlo and Rivera re-marry; she has increasing success with her art.
 1950—Kahlo is hospitalized for nine months to treat complications from injuries suffered during the accident, a quarter-century earlier.
 1953—Kahlo's only solo show in Mexico is held, at the Galería de Arte Contemporáneo. In July her right leg is amputated.
 July 13, 1954—Frida Kahlo dies, at age 47.

1955—Rivera marries Emma Hurtado, his art dealer.

November 24, 1957—Diego Rivera dies; he is 71.

1958—Kahlo's family home (*La Casa Azul*) becomes the Frida Kahlo Museum.

IMPORTANT NAMES, TERMS, & PLACES:

Los Tres Grandes de México (the three great Mexican painters of the 20th century):

José Clemente Orozco, David A. Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera.

The *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (TGP), the People's Printmaking Studio, in Mexico City, directed by Leopoldo Méndez.

Diego Rivera (1886-1957), Frida Kahlo's spouse.

Tehuantepec, in Mexico's Oaxaca region, where Kahlo's mother was born. (A woman from there is called a *Tehuana*.)

La Casa Azul (The Blue House), in Coyoacán, Mexico City. Kahlo was born, raised, and died there; it is now the Frida Kahlo Museum.

The Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo House-Studio Museum, in San Ángel, Mexico City; where the couple moved in 1933.

mestiza/mestizo, referring to a Mexican with a "mixed" European and Indigenous heritage—such as Kahlo's mother, or Kahlo herself.

retablo, a small religious painting on tin, usually by a self-taught artist.

ex-voto, a type of *retablo* thanking a revered figure (e.g., the Virgin Mary) for a miracle, typically the healing of a loved one from illness or injury.

Tina Modotti (1896-1942), an Italian model/actress/photographer, married to the American photographer Edward Weston; had an affair with Rivera.

calavera, an image of a skeleton/skull, popular in Mexico on the Day of the Dead (*El Día de los Muertos*)

Mexicanidad, celebrating Mexico's Indigenous culture and rejecting colonialism.

huipil, a square-cut, embroidered tunic/dress, traditionally worn by many Indigenous Mexican women.

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), a hero of the Russian Revolution; had an affair with Kahlo.

André Breton (1896-1966), French author and self-appointed spokesperson for Surrealism; admired Kahlo.

Nickolas Muray (1892-1965), Hungarian-born photographer; had an affair--and, later, a substantial friendship—with Kahlo.

Itzcuintli/Xoloitzcuintli dog (a.k.a. "Mexican hairless dog"); Kahlo owned several.

Gringolandia, Kahlo's disparaging term for the U.S.A.

Clare Boothe Luce (1903-1987), a noted American author and politician who admired Kahlo.

SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL ARTWORKS DISCUSSED [all are by Kahlo]

Frida and Diego [wedding portrait], 1931 (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

Self-Portrait Dedicated to Leon Trotsky, 1937 (National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC)

The Two Fridas, 1939 (Museum of Modern Art, Mexico City)

Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird, 1940, Harry Ransom Center
University of Texas, Austin

Self-Portrait as a Tehuana (Diego On My Mind), 1943 (Jacques and Natasha Gelman
Collection of 20th-Century Mexican Art, Mexico City)

Tree of Hope, Remain Strong, 1946 (Private Collection, Paris)

The Broken Column, 1944 (Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City)

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