

Only genuine feelings and sincere emotion: Frida Kahlo's paintings don't lie

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Abstract: Appreciating Frida Kahlo's paintings requires courage, empathy, and strong psychological resilience, as she does not hide the excruciating pain and despair in her life. She spread her bloody wounds naked on the canvas, and all her scars seemed to shimmer with a strange luster in her self-portraits. However, she did not beg for sympathy or pity, she only sincerely expressed her genuine feelings for physical and mental pain. Frida Kahlo suffered infantile paralysis since her childhood, when she was 18 years old, a tram accident destroyed her whole life. In the later years, she experienced an unexpected miscarriage and was told that she could not give birth to children any longer; and she stayed unbelievable long time in bed due to several failed surgeries and horrible health condition. However, none of the above has stopped her to paint. This article focuses on her five paintings composed in 1932, 1944, 1945 and 1946, which highlight an obvious and strong connection between the pain and artistic inspiration. The profound compositions, backgrounds, details, symbols, metaphors, and contrasts of light and shadow have transformed the pain she experienced into an art that implies patience.

Key Words: Frida Kahlo; artistic expression; pain; symbols; metaphors

1. Preface

How to display, present, and express suffering has always been a serious topic in art history. Before Frida Kahlo, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch have contributed highly infectious masterpieces of great tension, while Frida Kahlo brought new breakthroughs. Her magnificent imagination gives her paintings with evident self-portrait features a distorted beauty, reminiscent of a terrifying quote by the famous French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan: "Even suicide has a special beauty."

2. Disease, accident and Frida Kahlo's early art life: A broken body which carries an unfortunate destiny and abundant artistic genes

Frida Kahlo's father Guillermo Kahlo is of German descent, and her mother Matilde Calderón is of Native American and Spanish descent. At that time, this was not an ordinary marriage. The two persons not only had different backgrounds, but also had vastly different education, beliefs, and personalities. Guillermo Kahlo received a good education, while Matilde Calderón was illiterate; Guillermo Kahlo was an atheist, while Matilde Calderón devoutly believed in Catholicism; Guillermo Kahlo was tolerant to children, while the mother often punished the children severely. The two seem to have only one unexpected commonality -- illness, with Matilde Calderón suffering from severe depression and Guillermo Kahlo frequently having seizures. After Frida Kahlo was born, her mother's depression worsened. She deliberately kept a distance from her children, leaving the younger ones to the older ones to take care of. Meanwhile, her father, who was also in poor physical condition, took on the responsibility of raising the children. His thin shoulders became the only support for the children.

But the disease seemed to be inherited within the family as a dim and sobbing gray gene. At the age of six, Frida Kahlo suddenly contracted polio without warning. She was forced to stay in bed for nine months. Since then, her right leg muscles have been shrinking like Chinese parasol's leaves in late autumn. In order to exercise her atrophied muscles, Frida Kahlo designed a series of targeted sports herself. She even participated in weightlifting, boxing, and other sports that were considered male sports at the time. However, no matter how much effort she put in, she was still a disabled person with a thick left leg and a thin right leg. She and her photographer father became close friends in need, and Guillermo Kahlo occasionally took his beloved daughter on photography trips, encouraging her not to give up the vast world due to her leg defect. Frida Kahlo learned how to use a camera, observe details, and how to

view things from a photographer's perspective, all of which were beneficial for her future as a painter. The father daughter journey in childhood was unforgettable. Accompanying her father, she was not only a tender lamb, but also played the role of a healer in turn. She witnessed her father's periodic epilepsy firsthand, and every time he had a seizure, she patiently comforted him until he calmed down. The several diseases that plagued this family shrouded Frida Kahlo like an indelible black mist, and at a young age, she deeply felt the fragility of life.

At the age of 15, intelligent and diligent, she was selected to attend the best high school in Mexico, the National Preparatory School, with a medical dream in her heart. At that time, only 35 female students were selected, while the remaining 2000 were male students. In 1925, Frida Kahlo was 18 years old, at the age of the blossom of a beautiful emerald flower. The wings of her dreams soared in the sky, but September 17th of that year changed her whole life. If at a young age she had already felt uneasy about the various helplessness in life, then a tragic traffic accident left a deep impression on her what "Calamity from heaven, the world is unpredictable" mean. That day, she took the bus home and a tram that couldn't stop due to a system malfunction drove towards her bus like a wild boar going crazy. The bus was instantly shattered into pieces, and the tram only stopped after running over dozens of people. A metal handrail pierced Frida Kahlo's pelvis straight, and afterwards, she recalled, "Like a sharp sword piercing a bull, this handrail took away my virginity in the cruelest way possible." Blood was stacked on top of blood, and the damaged body was adjacent to the damaged body. Amidst screams, she was carried onto an ambulance and taken to the hospital. She underwent a lengthy surgery, and what she did not foresee was that she would have to go through ten surgeries of various sizes, this time just the beginning of a nightmare. The tram accident left her with a forever damaged body, destined to drag her nearly paralyzed legs, deformed femur, scarred skin, and immune deficient liver through this life with great difficulty. The devilish tram completely shattered her medical dream, and painting, which she had previously only regarded as a hobby, became her everything.

After being discharged from the hospital and returning home, she lay on a four-column bed. Her family had set up a large canopy above the bed, which was connected to a mirror. A special easel was placed in front of her, so that even if she was lying on the sickbed, she could paint. Many difficulties have hindered her from doing what others consider normal, and for her at this moment, there is nothing more normal than depicting desires that cannot be fulfilled. In fact, she initially painted just to pass the boring and difficult first recovery period.

During this period, she studied European art history and had a deep love for portrait painting during the German and Italian Renaissance. In 1926, she created "Self Portrait in a Velvet Dress", which Dr. Julian Beecroft once commented, "This painting reflects the influence of the stylized painter Agnolo Bronzino on her. Despite lacking psychological depth and basic modeling methods, it is still an excellent painting for a 19-year-old novice in the art world."

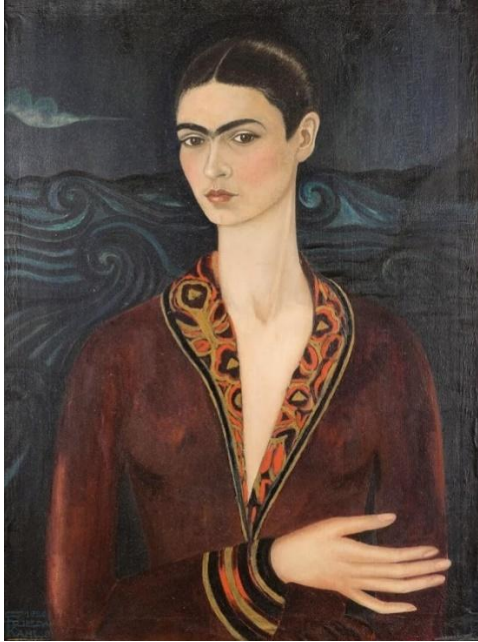


Image 1. Self Portrait in a Velvet Dress (1926), by Frida Kahlo

Website source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/self-portrait-in-a-velvet-dress.jsp>

The perspective of lying down to see the world is strange, but this is the real world in her eyes, a world limited by illness but also filled with emotional tension due to illness. The recurring pains and postoperative recovery periods forced her to be alone for a long time. Among her 143 paintings, 55 are self-portraits. And as is well known, she suffered betrayal and harm in her marriage to Diego Rivera. She once said, "I paint myself because I am often alone, and also because I am the subject I know best about. " In her self-portraits, she is both the subject and object, as well as a third party who observes her with a cold eye. At the beginning, her gaze in the self-portraits revealed doubts about life, but as time passed, her gaze became increasingly cold, showing contempt and disdain for fate. This is because she is increasingly aware that she will never be cured, and painting has gradually become everything in her life.



Image 2. Frida Kahlo painting on her bed

Website Source: <https://taketonews.com/who-was-frida-kahlo-the-artist-that-fascinates-argentinians/>

3. Miscarriage and Frida Kahlo's 1932: No child born, however two masterpieces born

Artists and art critics of Frida Kahlo's time defined her paintings as "surrealist art" due to the eerie imagination in them, but she scoffed at this trendy term at the time. She once said, "I don't understand why people say my works are surrealist paintings, because I only paint my reality, that's all. My theme has always been the profound reactions of my feelings, mental states, and life itself within me, so I often depict everything in my own image. This is the most sincere and authentic thing I can do, which is to express my inner and outer skin-cutting feelings." The reason why there is an unbreakable trust between her paintings and the viewers is precisely because of this.

3.1 "Henry Ford Hospital"

In 1930, while pregnant, she was forced to terminate her pregnancy at Henry Ford Hospital due to a displacement of her uterus. In 1932, she created "Henry Ford Hospital".



Image 3. Henry Ford Hospital (1932), by Frida Kahlo

Website source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/henry-ford-hospital.jsp>

In the painting, she is lying naked and alone on a hospital bed, with blood and dirt flowing under her black pubic hair. Tears stick to her face at the corners of her eyes like a big grain of rice, particularly conspicuous, and her body is uncomfortably twisted. Six bright red ribbons stretched out from her palms or inside her abdomen, with six things tied to their ends -- snails, a baby, uterine models, medical equipment, orchids, and clinical corsets. Everything in this painting has its symbolic meaning: the snails symbolize the slow process of miscarriage and healing; the baby is the wish that she and Diego have longed for but ultimately failed to fulfill; the crimson uterus model contains a semi formed fetus; the gray and heavy medical equipment symbolizes the cold and cruel surgical process; the withered orchid collapsed on the ground, which was a withered uterus; the clinical corset is like an empty skin bag, seemingly strongly supporting disappointment, loneliness, and unfulfilled visions.

Despite the inscription "Henry Ford Hospital" on the edge of the bed, surprisingly, this bed is not within the hospital. In this painting, the background of the hospital bed is a gray blue sky and distant industrial scenes -- coal stoves, boiler rooms, factories, chimneys, which are poured with reinforced concrete and are alienated and indifferent. On the brown ground, there was a hospital bed standing abruptly, as if it had grown out of thin air. If we consider a person as an island, then a hospital bed can be

regarded as a groaning island, and a patient lying on the bed can be regarded as a sighing and helpless island.

The use of symbolism and metaphorical techniques creates aesthetic distance, but at the same time, the creation of this aesthetic distance evokes a stronger resonance among viewers about the artist's anguish in creating this artwork. As an artist, Frida Kahlo at her early stage focused more on absorbing nutrients from Western classical oil paintings and training her painting skills, but just after a few years, she had already formed a distinct personal artistic characteristic and style. The above artwork is the evidence.

3.2 "My Birth"

Frida Kahlo's paintings express the sound of solitude. After all, loneliness is the bottom color and the final weight of life, and avoiding loneliness is actually a kind of sadness. Chinese poet Feng Zhi (冯至) once wrote in his poem "The Snake": "My loneliness is like a snake, no words, just being silently. If you dream of it, don't be afraid! It is my loyal companion." Frida Kahlo's paintings bear the weight that life cannot bear for her. Watching her paintings is like watching a person swallow a bullet and let it explode in the stomach. In 1932, in addition to "Henry Ford Hospital", Frida also created "My Birth".

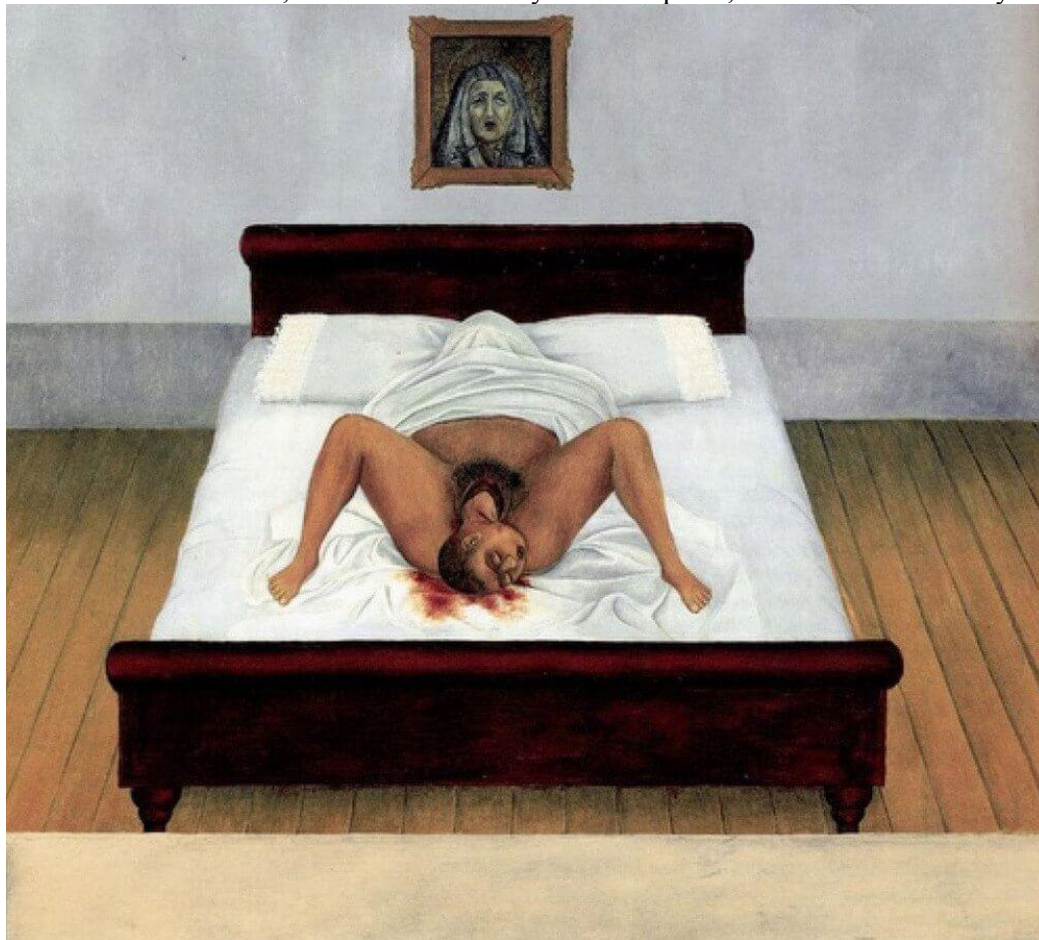


Image 4. My Birth (1932), by Frida Kahlo

Website Source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/my-birth.jsp>

This painting has a simple composition but rich connotations; The visual impact is strong, but the meaning is somewhat obscure; It is both imaginative and elusive. It depicts the following scene: Frida Kahlo's huge head is protruding or being squeezed out of a woman's uterus. The woman's upper body has been covered by a bedsheets, revealing only half of her abdomen, her lower body covered in thick black pubic hair, and her legs spread out. The child she gave birth to was not a baby, but an adult Frida Kahlo. But that chubby round face (Frida's face shape in real life and other self-portraits is thin and long) and closed eyelids seem to tell the viewer that this is a new life that has not yet opened its eyes and is

confused, this is Frida's rebirth. She once wrote in her diary, "I imagine how I was born; I gave birth to myself." Therefore, what was covered by the white sheets was not Frida's mother, but Frida. But the white sheets, like a shroud, symbolize mourning and grief for her mother, who had just passed away. A pool of blood stains under the buttocks implies the misfortune of having a miscarriage.

As for why in this painting, it is not the mother who gave birth to Frida, but Frida who gave birth to herself, this may imply a lack of maternal love in her growth process. As mentioned earlier, severe depression caused Frida's mother to intentionally distance herself from her children, and normal intimacy between mother and daughter seemed rare in this family. The illness prevented her mother from giving her complete and unconditional maternal love, and it was also the illness that destined her to have no children for a lifetime. She will never be able to build an intimate relationship between herself and her own children. Therefore, although this painting depicts the process of life's arrival, there is no joy in it. From being thrown into this world to being put in a coffin, Frida is lonely from beginning to end. Her mother was absent, even during the childbirth process; Her child was also absent, only the bloodstain left during the miscarriage was present.

This bizarre scene happened on a spacious bed, with pillowcases and sheets made of pure white, making the black pubic hair and red bloodstains particularly glaring; The wooden frame at the head and tail of the bed is so red that it turns black, and the heavy color is an ominous omen that makes one feel nervous and uneasy; The placement of this bed is in an empty indoor space, without any other furniture or decorations. The walls are gray and white, and the middle area of the wooden striped floor presents a yellow color, while the end leading to the wall presents a moldy green color, indicating that the floor has aged; In short, this is a suffocating monotonous space.

There is a portrait of the Virgin Mary hanging on the wall. The Virgin Mary has an old face, furrowed brows, and a painful expression, symbolizing the seven bitters she has suffered. The deeper meaning is that even the seven bitters suffered by the Virgin Mary were not as great as the suffering of reincarnation that Frida endured in her lifetime, i.e.: Lack of intimate relationships between the mother and the children, and inability to establish new intimate relationships between the mother and the children. The Virgin Mary is helpless in this matter, unable to shed tears.

This image of the Virgin Mary differs significantly from the one hung in Mexican Catholic churches or Catholic households. Due to the revelation that Maria became pregnant without fertilization, most depictions of the Virgin Mary in Mexico highlight her youthful, beautiful, elegant, gentle, and generous physical appearance and temperament. Even when depicting her suffering, her expression should not be portrayed as extremely sorrowful, but rather as a pitiful and restrained melancholy, which coincides with "the golden mean" (中庸之道) of Chinese culture to some extent. In short, the portrait of the Virgin Mary in Mexico must comply with the requirements of Catholic doctrine.

This restraint originates from the Western Catholic tradition, where the Bible emphasizes the undertaking and commitment of mission, the honor comes precisely from a conscious and voluntary commitment to a mission. For example, God chose Mary to undertake the mission of giving birth to Jesus Christ and all the suffering that followed, which was a glory for Mary, and the suffering itself constituted an important part of the mission. Maria's commitment to God's mission should naturally be voluntary, and she must endure hardships in silence. Therefore, works of art about the Virgin Mary should not excessively depict a mournful atmosphere. If the Virgin Mary in the work shows an unrestrained release of sadness, it will lead to an offense, which is a questioning of God's mission. That is, why did God choose me to bear such deep suffering? This kind of questioning is impious, as it will ultimately lead to distrust of God.

During Spain's colonial rule over Mexico, the spread of Catholicism was used as a means of governance, hence all Mexican people were required to believe in Catholicism. Although Mexico gained independence in the early 19th century, the devout faith in Catholicism had taken root in the hearts of the Mexican people. Living in such a strong religious atmosphere, yet including a depiction of the Virgin Mary that clearly does not conform to Catholic doctrine and spirit in her painting, such behavior is undoubtedly rebellious. The Virgin Mary depicted by Frida Kahlo is frowning, old and ugly, and her grief has not been regulated and restrained by doctrine, hence not been expressed by a moderate and controlled

way. If it weren't for the halo above her head implying her identity, many viewers would have mistaken her for an ugly old witch.

However, there is no historical evidence to suggest that Frida Kahlo was an atheist or a heretic. In fact, Frida is most likely also a Catholic. But when creating this painting, she chose to express a nightmare that haunted her, representing a moment of extreme pain. When the pain of this moment fully erupted, she was questioning God. Perhaps her distrust of God only existed for a short period of time, but the emotional power accumulated in this moment gave her artistic expression a twisted charm. Here, Frida's artistic philosophy is fully revealed -- not seeking beauty, but seeking genuine feeling and sincere emotion!

4. A failed surgery and three special paintings

From 1944 to 1946, Frida Kahlo experienced persistent and severe pain in her spine and back, which had been disharmonious for a long time. She underwent a surgery in New York for treatment. Before the surgery, she thought that even if the pain could not be completely eliminated, at least it could alleviate the pain. She never thought that this surgery would be a complete failure.

4.1 "The Broken Column"

In 1944, she created "The Broken Column".

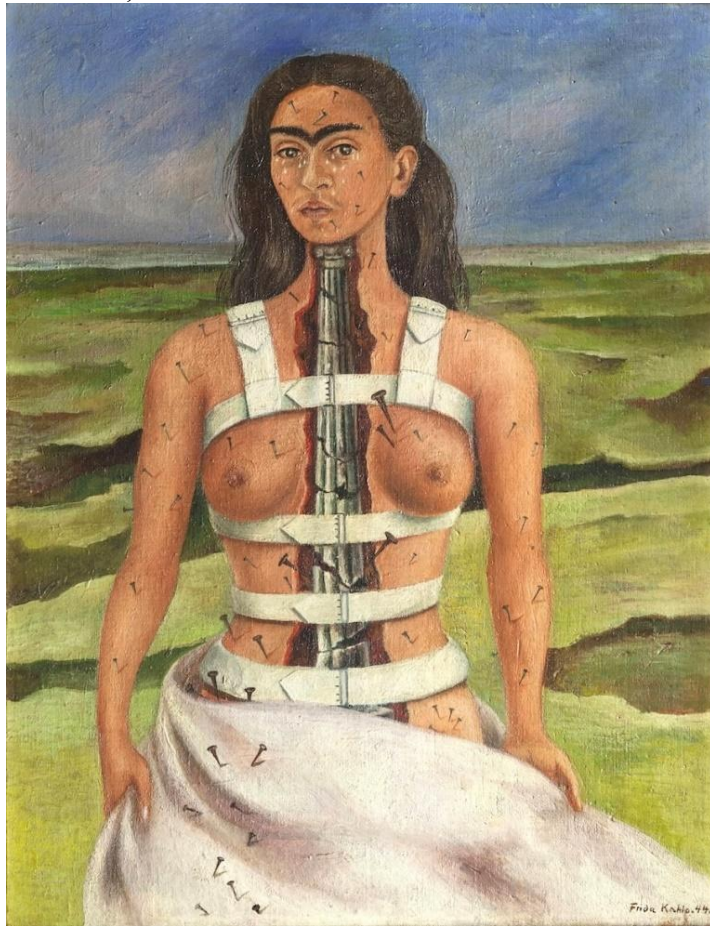


Image 5. The Broken Column (1944), by Frida Kahlo

Website source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-broken-column.jsp>

Like her other paintings, her expression of pain is never vague or obscure, but rather appears naked in a convulsive way. In this painting, her body is mercilessly cut open from the middle, and her spine is depicted as a stone pillar that seems to have been broken and damaged in multiple places due to the war and vicissitudes. Her forehead, face, neck, shoulders, chest, abdomen, spine, arms, and the sheets that wrapped around her lower body were all covered with countless iron nails. She shed tears like rain, with

the dry and cracked earth behind her, and the deep gray purple sky pressing down on her head, as if a natural disaster had just occurred. Although the earth appeared in varying shades of green, there was no sign of vitality.

Nevertheless, her body under her painting brush is robust and perceptible, with every muscle, especially the protruding breasts, infused with indescribable strength; Her spine, which has multiple fractures, seems to be unstable and could collapse into ashes at any moment, but it still stands firm; large strings of tears rolled down from the corners of her eyes, but her eyes remained fixed on the viewers, forcing them to confront the pain of her life and the tragedy of her fate with her.

The five major signs of life are body temperature, breathing, pulse, blood pressure, and pain. In other words, only living people experience pain. Pain precisely represents being alive. The violent consequences brought about by unfortunate fate, such as skin and muscle cuts, bone fractures, blood flowing from the body, etc., challenge the viewer's psychological acceptance ability.

4.2 "Without Hope"

Imagination is an extension of sensation, just as philosophy is an extension of thought, all of Frida Kahlo's imagination revolves around personal experience. Her self-portraits are sometimes twisted and deformed, sometimes bloody, sometimes spine chilling, sometimes nauseating like devil's saliva, because she has endured the torment and misery of hell, her bones have shattered like fragile vases falling onto stone roads, and her soul has suffered like pine branches in a furnace fire. The terrifying illusions in her paintings are echoes of agony, and the expressionless and almost numb faces in her self-portraits are a habit of affliction.

In 1945, due to various surgical sequelae and illnesses, Frida Kahlo had to rest in bed for a long time. At the same time, she lost her appetite and became abnormally thin. In order to maintain her basic bodily functions, Dr. Eloesser developed a detailed eating plan for her, which not only included strict ingredient selection, but also included when and how to eat. According to this plan, she must eat every two hours and all food must be mixed into a thick paste. She, who had already lost her taste buds, was forced to frequently eat mushy and even disgusting food that was even more tasteless than medication. In the same year, she created the painting "Without Hope".

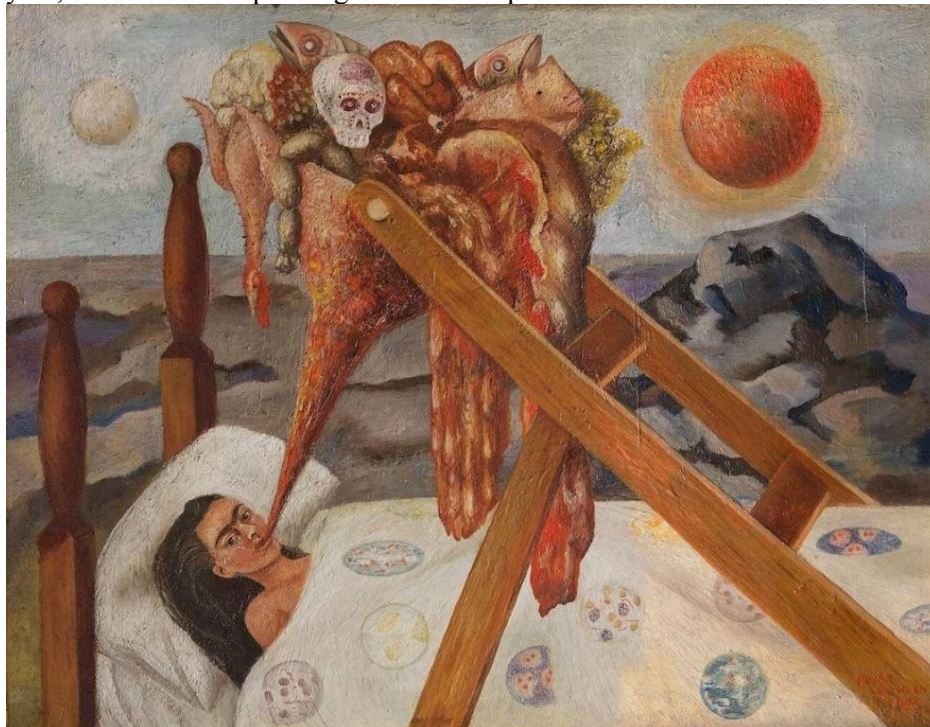


Image 6. Without Hope (1945), by Frida Kahlo

Website source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/without-hope.jsp>

The Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke once wrote in "Duino Elegies": "Beauty is not something, it is only the beginning of terror that we can bear." In the view of Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, artists are those who dare to go to hell, dance with wolves, and endure the terror of ugliness. Frida Kahlo is exactly such an artist, and her painting "Without Hope" depicts the reality in hell.

Few people can stare directly at this painting for more than thirty seconds, as the viewer's senses are completely synchronized with hers at the time, causing nausea and vomiting. In this painting, there are no works placed on the easel of Frida Kahlo's four poster bed edge, instead, there are hanging roosters with plucked feathers, dead fish with rolled eyes and open mouths, unknown animals dragging bloody livers, pig intestines hanging down one by one, and human skulls. All of this eventually converged into a huge funnel, with its mouth connected to Frida Kahlo's mouth lying on the bed, as if everything had been forcefully poured into her mouth. She couldn't move, only turned her face and looked at the viewers with teary eyes.

The background of this painting is barren land without a blade of grass but only with gray brown rocks, with the sun and moon rising simultaneously on the desolate horizon. The alternation of day and night has completely lost its meaning for her, leaving only the endless pain of day and night. The process of expressing meaning of this painting is straightforward, but the combination of various elements highlights Frida Kahlo's imagination. The metaphorical and symbolic expression of details once again "shows off" Frida Kahlo's artistic talent.

4.3 "The Wounded Deer"

Accompanied by countless struggles and disappointment, Frida Kahlo soberly realized that pain would become her lifelong enemy. However, as people often say, eternal enemies are also eternal friends. If Beethoven's invigorating spirit lies in holding the throat of fate, then Frida Kahlo's greatness lies in resisting fate by faithfully presenting fate itself. As she herself said, "I once tried to drown my sadness, but this bastard learned to swim, and now I understand that this is reality. When I immerse myself in genuine sadness, I feel fine."

In 1946, she created "The Wounded Deer".



Image 7. The Wounded Deer (1946), by Frida Kahlo

Website source: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-wounded-deer.jsp>

In this painting, Frida Kahlo depicted herself as a deer that had been hit by several arrows, with blood stains all over its body. Viewers seemed to be able to see blood trickling down from the hole where the arrow was hit, dyeing the gray brown deer fur a deep red. This painting draws inspiration from the creativity of the Sphinx, and the reason why viewers know that this deer is the incarnation of Frida is because Frida's face is connected between the deer's body and antlers. There were no tears on her face, but there was a touching sadness in her eyes, and a helpless silence settled within her tightly closed lips. Deer's four hooves were limp and lying in the jungle, giving up the final struggle. The soil extends from shallow to deep behind the deer, and not far away, there is lightning and thunder. The blue-green lake water is rippled by the grimacing metal-mesh-like lightning. The electric light and stone fire have cleaved a still young tree, and the fallen branch of the tree is lush and verdant. However, it is no longer a life form that can be saved. In the unexpected future, it will wither, decay, and return to dust.

At the bottom of the screen is written the word "fate", a terrifying and dreadful term that binds humanity, individuals, and history together. Oedipus could not escape the absurd life of killing his father and marrying his mother. Sisyphus had to push a huge rock up to the top of the mountain all day long, only to return after it rolled down. Czesław Miłosz recalled that a friend of his once wrote a poem: A person tried hard to climb out of a dark well, but in the end, it was in vain. It turned out that he was the son of a well digger. Frida Kahlo couldn't escape this seemingly predetermined fate.

It is worth mentioning that the prototype of the deer in this painting is Frida's own captive pet deer Granizo. As she had no children in her lifetime, she kept various pets to make up for her regrets. She loved them as her own children, and deer was undoubtedly her favorite species.

On May 3 of the same year, Frida gave this painting as a wedding gift to her friends Lina and Arcady Boitler. When giving the painting, she attached a note that read, "I leave you my portrait so that you can feel my presence day and night when I am away from you."

5. Conclusion

Pain, like a ghost, constantly lingers around Frida Kahlo's paintings, because in real life, pain is indeed with her day and night. She once said, "My paintings always carry pain, conveying a message of pain to the whole world." Her repeated depiction of ache stems from the tribulation that repeatedly torments her, and only a soul soaked in endless bitter rain can depict the various shapes of suffering.

Knowing the story behind Frida Kahlo's each painting can allow viewers to more deeply appreciate the emotional power of her works, but even those who do not know everything Frida Kahlo has experienced can still be influenced by her paintings, because her creative perspective often seems to coincide with a childlike and naive view of the world. However, the exquisite and complex details, clever metaphors and symbols in her paintings all demonstrate her meticulous conception and cautious choices.

Slavoj Žižek believed that in pure or extreme pleasure, what people encounter is existence itself, the primitive material of things, such as human excrement, rough flesh and blood under the skin, bodily fluids, and so on. So here, isn't the perception of pain the same? This existence hidden beneath reality is extremely cruel, but the revelation of it leads to another unique beauty.

According to Jacques Lacan's Three Orders Theory, the realm of the Imaginary refers to the experiential dimension controlled and guided by subjective perception or fantasy. The realm of the Symbolic represents the dimension of language. Human beings live in language and use it to think. Language exists before thinking, or in other words, language constructs thinking. Therefore, the Imaginary realm needs to be expressed through the Symbolic realm. However, language itself is fluid and concepts are uncertain, and there are only relative differences between words. The realm of the Real is not equivalent to the physical world, but rather the deep neural activity and the truth of the world that language cannot express. The fears, desires, impulses, and so on deep within an individual's heart all belong to this domain. When an individual's real-life experience collides with the real world, trauma is formed.

In fact, Frida Kahlo's many paintings depict this kind of trauma, which is different from the unfortunate encounters, setbacks, and hardships in real life. Although the former may be associated with the latter, the former mainly reflects the individual's unconscious psychological activities. The works "My Birth"

created by Frida Kahlo in 1932 and "Without Hope" created in 1945, as analyzed earlier, can be regarded as very typical examples, they both depict a nightmare-like trauma, some parts of which, although derived from real-life experiences, are chaotic, disordered, and indescribable as a whole. When Frida Kahlo attempted to use painting as an artistic means to depict her trauma as realistically as possible, she was also communicating reality and the realm of the Real through a visual symbol system at the same time. Her semiotic construction of this communication process demonstrates her keen and delicate perception, explosive emotions, and artistic cultivation of integrating various visual elements into one painting.

When this communication process unfolds to the viewers, to some extent, they are dragged into a terrifying world -- the realm of the Real, and the moment they are dragged into it is precisely the beginning of aesthetic activity. This is the charm of Frida Kahlo's works.

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