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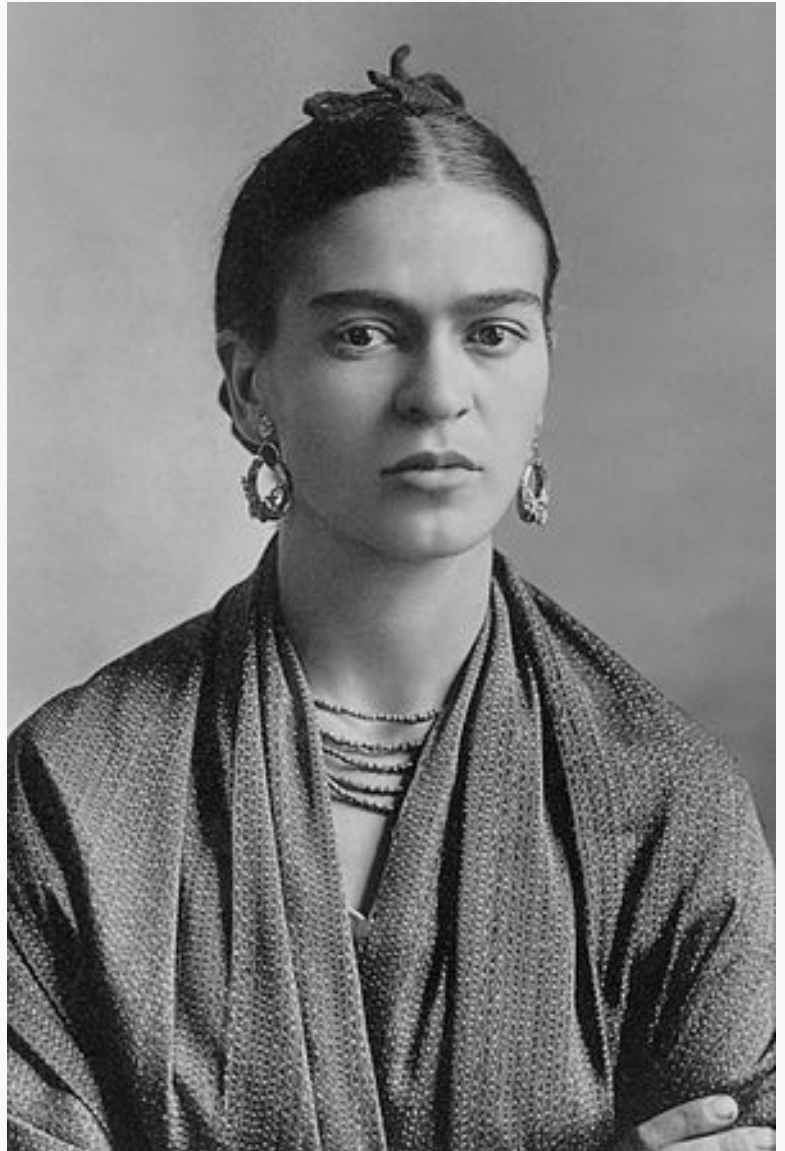


Frida Kahlo

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Frida Kahlo de Rivera (Spanish

Frida Kahlo



Kahlo in 1932, photographed by her father [Guillermo Kahlo](#)

Born	Magdalena Carmen Frieda ^[1] Kahlo y Calderón July 6, 1907 Coyoacán, Mexico City, Mexico
Died	July 13, 1954 (aged 47) Coyoacán, Mexico City, Mexico

Nationality	Mexican
Education	Self-taught
Known for	Painting
Notable work in museums:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albright–Knox Art Gallery Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires Frida Kahlo Museum, Coyoacán Harry Ransom Center Madison Museum of Contemporary Art Museo Dolores Olmedo Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City Museum of Modern Art Phoenix Art Museum San Francisco Museum of Modern Art^[2]
Movement	Surrealism, Magic realism

pronunciation: [[f i ð a k a l o](#)]; July 6, 1907 – July 13, 1954), born **Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderón**,^{[1][3]} was a [Mexican painter](#) who is best known for her self-portraits.^[4]

Kahlo's life began and ended in Mexico City, in her home known as the [Blue House](#). Her work has been celebrated in Mexico as emblematic of national and [indigenous](#) tradition, and by [feminists](#) for its uncompromising depiction of the female experience and form.^[5]

[Mexican culture](#) and tradition are important in her work, which has been sometimes characterized as [naïve art](#) or [folk art](#).^[6] Her work has also been described as [surrealist](#), and in 1938 [André Breton](#), principal initiator of the surrealist movement, described Kahlo's art as a "ribbon around a bomb".^[5] Frida rejected the "surrealist" label; she believed that her work reflected more of her reality than her dreams.^[7]

Kahlo had a volatile marriage with the famous Mexican artist [Diego Rivera](#). She suffered lifelong health problems, many caused by a traffic accident she survived as a teenager. Recovering from her injuries isolated her from other people, and this isolation influenced her works, many of which are self-portraits of one sort or another. Kahlo suggested, "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."^[8] She also stated, "I was born a bitch. I was born a painter."^[9]

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Childhood, 1907–1925

Frida Kahlo was born on July 6, 1907, in her parents' house known as *La Casa Azul* (The Blue House), in [Coyoacán](#). At the time, Coyoacán was a small town on the outskirts of [Mexico City](#).

Kahlo's father, [Guillermo Kahlo](#) (1871–1941), was born Carl Wilhelm Kahlo in 1871, in [Pforzheim](#), Germany, the son of Jakob Heinrich Kahlo and Henriette Kaufmann. During Kahlo's lifetime and subsequently, media reports stated that her father was Jewish.^{[10][11]} However, genealogical research indicates that her father was not of Jewish heritage, but was from a German [Lutheran](#) family.^{[12][13]} Wilhelm Kahlo [emigrated to Mexico](#) in 1891, at the age of nineteen, and upon his arrival, changed his German forename, Wilhelm, to its Spanish equivalent, [Guillermo](#).^{[10][11]}

Kahlo's mother, Matilde Calderón y González, was a devout [Roman Catholic](#) of mixed Spanish and [indigenous Mexican](#) ancestry.^[14] Kahlo's parents were married soon after the death of Guillermo's first wife, which occurred during the birth of her second child. Although their marriage was quite unhappy, Guillermo and Matilde had four daughters; Kahlo was the third. She had two older half sisters who were raised in the same household. Kahlo had a difficult relationship with her mother, who was domineering and depressive, but her relationship with her father was affectionate.^[15]

The [Mexican Revolution](#) began

during 1910, when Kahlo was three years old. She later gave her birth date as July 7, 1910, allegedly wanting her birth to coincide with the beginning of the revolution so her life would begin with the birth of modern

Mexico.^[17] In her writings, she recalled that her mother would usher her and her sisters inside the house as gunfire echoed in the streets of her hometown.^[citation needed]

Kahlo contracted **polio** at age six, which left her right leg thinner than the left; she disguised this later in life by wearing long skirts or trousers. To help her regain her strength, her father encouraged her to exercise and play sports. She took up bicycling, roller skating, swimming, boxing, and wrestling, despite the fact that many of these activities were then reserved for boys.^{[18][19]} It has been conjectured that she was born with **spina bifida**, a congenital condition that could have affected both spinal and leg development.^{[20][21]}

In 1922, Kahlo was enrolled in the **Escuela Nacional Preparatoria**, one of Mexico's premier schools, where she was one of only thirty-five girls. Kahlo joined a **clique** at the school and became enamored of its strongest personality, Alejandro Gómez Arias.^[22]

Bus accident, 1925

On September 17, 1925, Kahlo was riding in a bus that collided with a trolley car. She suffered serious injuries as a result of the accident, including a broken **spinal column**, a broken **collarbone**, broken ribs, a **broken pelvis**, eleven fractures in her right leg, a crushed and dislocated right foot, and a dislocated shoulder. In addition, an iron handrail pierced her abdomen and her **uterus**, compromising her reproductive capacity.^[23] Kahlo was 18 years old at the time.^[24]

The accident left her in a great deal of pain, and she spent three months recovering in a full body cast. Although she recovered from her injuries and eventually regained her ability to walk, she had **relapses** of extreme pain for the remainder of her life. The pain was intense and often left her confined to a hospital or bedridden for months at a time. She had as many as 35 operations as a result of

[portrait\).jpg](#)

Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, Nickolas Muray Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin^[16]

the accident, mainly on her back, her right leg, and her right foot. The medical complications and permanent damage also prevented Kahlo from having a child; though she conceived three times, all of her pregnancies had to be terminated.^[25]

Career as painter

See also: [List of paintings by Frida Kahlo](#)

After her accident, Kahlo abandoned the study of medicine and began to paint, to occupy herself during her three-month



1937 photograph by [Toni Frissell](#), from a fashion shoot for *Vogue*

immobilization. Self-portraits were a dominant motif then. Kahlo once said, "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."^[8] Her mother had a special easel made so she could paint in bed, and her father lent her his box of oil paints and some brushes.^[26] The 1926 painting, entitled *Self Portrait in a Velvet Dress*, shows her with a long and narrow face and neck, reflective of [Italian Renaissance](#) ideals.^[27]

Kahlo's accident made it impossible for her to have her own children, resulting in a miscarriage when she became pregnant. Because of this, many of her pieces reference reproduction failure. She painted *Henry Ford Hospital* right after her miscarriage in 1932. In this work, Frida depicts herself on a bed bleeding, with the cold and industrial feeling from being in Detroit, shown behind her. She chose to paint on a sheet of metal.^[27]

Kahlo created at least 140 paintings, along with dozens of drawings and studies.

Of her paintings, 55 are self-portraits which often incorporate symbolic portrayals of physical and psychological wounds. She insisted, "I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality."^[28]

Diego Rivera had a great

influence on Kahlo's painting style. Kahlo had always admired Rivera and his work. She first approached him in the [Ministry of Public Education](#), where he had been working on a mural in 1927. She showed him four of her paintings, and asked whether he considered her gifted. Rivera was impressed and said, "You have got talent." After that, he became a frequent welcomed guest at Kahlo's house. He gave her many insights about her artwork while still leaving her space to explore herself. The positive and encouraging comments made by Rivera strengthened Kahlo's wish to pursue a career as an artist.^[29]

Kahlo was also influenced by indigenous Mexican culture, which is apparent in her use of bright colors, dramatic symbolism and primitive style. She frequently included the monkey, which in Mexican [mythology](#) is a symbol of lust, and Kahlo portrayed it as tender and protective symbols. Christian and Jewish themes are often depicted in her work.^[30] She combined elements of the classic religious Mexican tradition with surrealist renderings.



Frida Kahlo with [Diego Rivera](#) in 1932, in a photograph by [Carl Van Vechten](#)



In 1938, Kahlo had her only solo gallery showing in the United States at the [Julien Levy Gallery](#). The works were well received and several prominent artists attended the event.^[31] At the invitation of [André Breton](#), she went to France during 1939 and was featured at an exhibition of her paintings in Paris. The [Louvre](#) bought one of her paintings on display, *The Frame*. It was the first work of a twentieth-century Mexican artist that the Louvre purchased. Kahlo made the acquaintance of [Wolfgang Paalen](#) and [Alice Rahon](#), whom she invited to come to Mexico.^[32]

Marriage, 1929–1954

As a young artist, Kahlo



[Malú Block](#) (left), Frida Kahlo (center), and [Diego Rivera](#) were photographed in Manhattan by [Carl Van Vechten](#) in 1932 while Rivera was working on a commissioned mural in Rockefeller Center

communicated with the Mexican painter [Diego Rivera](#), whose work she admired, asking him for advice about pursuing art as a career. He recognized her talent^[33] and encouraged her artistic development. They began an intimate relationship and were married in 1929, despite the disapproval of Kahlo's mother.

Their marriage was often troubled. Kahlo and Rivera both had irritable temperaments and numerous extramarital affairs. The [bisexual](#) Kahlo had affairs with both men and women, including [Isamu Noguchi](#) and [Josephine Baker](#);^[3] Rivera knew of and tolerated her relationships with women, but her relationships with men made him jealous. For her part, Kahlo was furious when she learned that Rivera had an affair with her younger sister, Cristina. The couple divorced in November 1939, but remarried in December

1940. Their second marriage was as troubled as the first. Their living quarters were often separate, although sometimes adjacent.^[34]

Later years and death

Active [communists](#), Kahlo and Rivera befriended [Leon Trotsky](#) during the late 1930s, after he fled Norway to Mexico to receive political asylum from the [Soviet Union](#) during [Joseph Stalin's](#) leadership. During 1937, Trotsky lived initially with Rivera and then at Kahlo's home where he and Kahlo had an affair.^[3] Trotsky and his wife then relocated to another house in [Coyoacán](#) where, in 1940, he was assassinated. Both Kahlo and Rivera broke with [Trotskyism](#) and openly became supporters of Stalin in 1939.^[35] In 1938, Kahlo travelled alone to New York City for her first solo exhibition; she was celebrated "like a movie star". There she met Hungarian photographer [Nickolas Muray](#), with whom she began a 10-year love affair.^[36]

In July 1952, Frida's right lower leg was amputated at the knee due to [gangrene](#). She had had a bout of [bronchopneumonia](#) about that time, which left her quite frail. She was very ill throughout 1954.^[3] Diego attended to Kahlo as she had [anxiety attacks](#). She increased her [morphine](#) consumption, betrayed by the unusually fleeting paintbrush in her paintings. In her last self-portrait, she looks like a withered sunflower, "no moon at all". A few days before her death, Kahlo participated in a demonstration against the [CIA invasion of Guatemala](#).^[36]

Kahlo died on July 13, 1954, soon after turning 47, and was cremated according to her wishes. A few days before her death, she wrote in her diary: "I hope the exit is joyful — and I hope never to return — Frida".^[3] The official cause of death was given as a [pulmonary embolism](#), although some suspected that she died from an [overdose](#) that may or may not have been accidental. No [autopsy](#) was performed. In his autobiography, Diego Rivera wrote that the day Kahlo died was the most tragic day of his life, and that, too late, he had realized that the most wonderful part of his life had been his love for her.^[3]

A [pre-Columbian](#) urn holding her ashes is on display in her former home, *La Casa Azul* (The Blue House), in [Coyoacán](#), which since 1958 has been maintained as a museum housing a number of her

works of art and numerous mementos and artifacts from her personal life.^[3]

Posthumous recognition

Aside from the 1939 acquisition by the Louvre and a 1946 \$1,000 award from the Mexican Government for her painting,^[37] Kahlo's work was not widely acclaimed until decades after her death. Often she was remembered only as [Diego Rivera](#)'s wife.



Image of Kahlo for [Day of the Dead](#) at the Museo Frida Kahlo

It was not until the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, with the beginning of *Neomexicanismo*, that she became well-known to the public.^[38]^[39] It was during this time that artists such as Kahlo, [Abraham Ángel](#), [Ángel Zárraga](#), and others gained recognition, and [Jesus Helguera](#)'s classical calendar paintings became famous.^[38]

Additional factors during the 1980s helped to make her better known: The first retrospective of Kahlo's work outside Mexico exhibited alongside the photographs of [Tina Modotti](#) opened at the [Whitechapel Gallery](#) in London in May 1982, organized and co-curated by [Peter Wollen](#) and [Laura Mulvey](#). The exhibition traveled to Sweden, Germany, Manhattan, and Mexico City. The movie *Frida, naturaleza viva* (1983), directed by [Paul Leduc](#) with [Ofelia](#)

[Medina](#) as Kahlo and painter Juan José Gurrola as Diego, was a great success. Hayden Herrera published the biography, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* in 1983,^[40] which became a worldwide bestseller.^[41] Raquel Tibol, a Mexican artist and personal friend of Kahlo, wrote *Frida Kahlo: una vida abierta* (2003).^[42] Mexican art critic and psychoanalyst [Teresa del Conde](#) wrote a biography in 1992^[43] and texts by other Mexican critics and theorists, such as Jorge Alberto Manrique appeared.^[38]

File:Suicide of Dorothy Hale.jpg

Frida Kahlo, *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, 1939, Oil on masonite, 60.4 × 48.6 cm. – [The Phoenix Art Museum](#), Phoenix, Arizona, USA. The legend translated: "In the city of New York on the twenty-first day of the month of October, 1938, at six o'clock in the morning, Mrs. [Dorothy Hale](#) committed suicide by throwing herself out of a very high window of the Hampshire House building. In her memory Mrs. [Clare Boothe Luce](#) commissioned^[44] this retablo, executed by Frida Kahlo."^[45]

From 1990–91, Kahlo's *Diego on my Mind* (1943), oil on masonite, 76 by 61 centimeters piece was used as the representative piece on the post for the [Metropolitan Museum of Art's Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries](#) art exhibit. In 1991, the opera *Frida* by [Robert Xavier Rodriguez](#), which had been commissioned by the [American Music Theater Festival](#), premiered in [Philadelphia](#).^[46]

In 1994, American jazz flautist and composer [James Newton](#) released an album inspired by

Kahlo titled *Suite for Frida Kahlo* on AudioQuest Music (now known as [Sledgehammer Blues](#)).^[47]

On June 21, 2001, Kahlo became the first Hispanic woman to be honored with a [U.S. postage stamp](#).^[48]

Frida (2002) is an American biographical movie, directed by [Julie Taymor](#), in which [Salma Hayek](#) portrayed the artist.^[49] The film, based on Herrera's book, grossed [US\\$ 58 million](#) worldwide.^[49]

From 9 June to 9 October 2005, close to 80 paintings by Kahlo were presented at the [Tate Modern](#) in London.^[50]

In 2006, Kahlo's painting *Roots* (1943) set a [US\\$5.6 million](#) auction record for a [Latin American](#) work.^[51]

In 2008, a play based on Kahlo's life premiered at the [Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#). *Frida Kahlo: Viva la vida!*, written by Mexican

Humberto Robles and performed by Gael Le Cornec, received an Artistic Excellence Award and a best female performer nomination at the [Brighton Festival Fringe](#) in 2009.^[52]

In 2008, a Frida Kahlo exhibition in the United States with more than 40 of her self-portraits, still lifes, and portraits was shown at the [Walker Art Center](#) in Minneapolis, the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#), the [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](#), and other venues.^[53]

During May 8 to July 5, 2009, [Nickolas Muray](#)'s photographs of Kahlo were featured alongside her *Self-Portrait of Monkey* (1938), in an exhibition at the [Albright–Knox Art Gallery](#) in [Buffalo, New York](#).^[54]

[Barbara Kingsolver](#)'s novel, *The Lacuna* (2009), features Kahlo, her life with Rivera, and her affair with Trotsky.^[55]

In February 2011, soprano [Dawn Upshaw](#) and the [Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra](#) premiered *La Centinela y La Paloma* (*The Keeper and the Dove*), composed by [Latin Grammy](#) composer [Gabriela Lena Frank](#) with texts by [Pulitzer Prize](#) playwright [Nilo Cruz](#). The orchestral song cycle imagines Frida Kahlo as a spirit who returns to visit with Diego Rivera during *El Día de los Muertos*.^[56]

From July 9 to October 2, 2011, an exhibition of works by Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) and Diego Rivera (1886–1957), *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera: Masterpieces from the Gelman Collection*, was shown at [Pallant House Gallery](#), Chichester, West Sussex.^[57]

In 2012 Kahlo was inducted into the [Legacy Walk](#), an outdoor public display which celebrates [LGBT](#) history and people.^[58]

From October 20, 2012 to January 20, 2013, Kahlo's paintings, as well as photographs of her, were featured in a dual retrospective with partner [Diego Rivera](#), entitled *Frida & Diego: Passion, Politics, and Painting*, at the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) in [Toronto](#). The exhibition traveled to the [High Museum of Art](#) in [Atlanta](#), February 14 to May 12, 2013.^[59]

In late April 2014, a musical play written and composed by Los Angeles, California playwright [Rita Ortez Provost](#), entitled *Tree of Hope*, was performed in West Hollywood, California at the [Macha Theatre](#).^[60]

On October 17, 2014 the four-act [opera](#) *Frida y Diego* by the Finnish composer [Kalevi Aho](#) had its premiere at the [Helsinki Music Centre](#), with a libretto in Spanish by Maritza Núñez.^[61]

An exhibition lasting from March 15 to July 12, 2015, "Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Detroit," was hosted in the [Detroit Institute of Arts](#), consisting primarily of paintings and sketches created by Kahlo and Rivera during their yearlong stay in the city between 1932 and 1933. This was the first occasion that Kahlo's works had ever been on display in the DIA.^{[62][63]}

The exhibition *Frida Kahlo, Art-Garden-Life*, from May 16 to November 1, 2015, at the [New York Botanical Garden](#),^[64] is the first to examine Kahlo's keen appreciation for the beauty and variety of the natural world, as evidenced by her home and garden as well as the complex use of plant imagery in her artwork.

Centennial celebration

Kahlo's 100th birthday was commemorated June 13 through August 12, 2007, with the largest exhibit of her paintings at the [Palacio de Bellas Artes](#), which was Kahlo's first comprehensive exhibit in Mexico.^[65] Works were on loan from Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Nagoya, Japan. The exhibit included one-third of her artistic production, as well as manuscripts and letters that had not been displayed previously.^[65] The exhibit surpassed the museum's previous attendance records.^[66] Some of her work was exhibited in [Monterrey](#), [Nuevo León](#), and moved to museums in the United States during September 2007.^[67]

On July 6, 2010, [Google](#) altered its standard logo to include a portrait of Kahlo, depicted in the style of her art to commemorate the 100th anniversary of her birthday.^[68]

On August 30, 2010, the [Bank of Mexico](#) issued a new [MXN\\$ 500](#)-peso note, featuring Kahlo and her painting entitled *Love's Embrace of the Universe, Earth, (Mexico), I, Diego, and Mr. Xólotl* (1949) on the back of the note while her husband Diego Rivera was on the front of the note.^[69]

From April 30 to August 9, 2010 a "Frida Kahlo Retrospective" at the [Walter-Gropius-Bau](#), Berlin exhibited more than 120 drawings and

paintings, including several drawings never before displayed publicly. The show was touted as a "centennial" exhibition, because of Kahlo's "preferred" birth year in 1910 during the Mexican Revolution.^[70]

La Casa Azul

[La Casa Azul \(The Blue House\)](#) in [Coyoacán, Mexico City](#), also referred to as Museo Frida Kahlo since it became a museum in 1958, is the family home where Frida Kahlo grew up and to which she returned in her final years. Her father, Guillermo Kahlo, built the house in 1907 as the Kahlo family home. [Leon Trotsky](#) stayed at this house when he first arrived in Mexico in 1937. Trotsky's final site of residence in Mexico City is located in close proximity to the Casa Azul.^[71]

Kahlo and Rivera lived together in the Blue House between 1929 and 1954. Diego Rivera donated it upon his death in 1957, three years after that of Kahlo. The house is a museum containing artifacts of her life and is a popular tourist destination.^[71]





See also



Book: Key artists

- [Western painting](#)
- [Amrita Sher-Gil](#)

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- [Frida nudes](#)[↗](#) photos by Julien Levy, 1938
- For a selection of documents on [Frida](#)[↗](#) at the ICAA Museum of Fine Arts Houston

- [Frida Kahlo](#)^[a], BBC discussion between Patience Schell, Valerie Fraser and Alan Knight, hosted by Melvyn Bragg, first broadcast 9 July 2015

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List of paintings		
Selected paintings	<i>Self-Portrait with Monkey</i> (1938) • <i>The Suicide of Dorothy Hale</i> (1938) • <i>What the Water Gave Me</i> (1938) • <i>The Two Fridas</i> (1939) • <i>Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird</i> (1940) • <i>The Wounded Table</i> (1940) • <i>The Broken Column</i> (1944) • <i>The Wounded Deer</i> (1946) • <i>The Love Embrace</i> (1949)	
Works about Kahlo	<i>Frida Still Life</i> • <i>Diego et Frida</i> • <i>Frida</i> (film) • <i>Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo</i> • <i>Frida</i> (opera)	
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Other	<i>Zapata</i> • <i>Diego et Frida</i> • Anahuacalli Museum	
Relations	Angelina Beloff (1st wife) • Guadalupe Marín (2nd wife) • Frida Kahlo (3rd wife) • Marie Vorobieff (conjugal partner) • Marika Rivera (daughter by Vorobieff)	
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