

Frida kahlo hsc

People



Friday Kohl " Art can be an expression of personal experience" Discuss this statement in reference to the life of Friday Kohl. Friday Kohl was described as " the first woman in the history of art to address with absolute and uncompromising honesty, general and specific themes which exclusively affect women" by life-long lover, Diego Riviera. As a Mexican female artist in the 20th century, Friday's themes expressed in her artworks were considered highly explicit at the time.

She was fine artist who used autobiographical through her extensive output of self-portraits. They are evidence of her need for self-expression and her exploration of identity. She overcame many difficult events including polio, long recovery from a serious car accident, two failed marriages, and several miscarriages some having a direct influence on her art. She used these experiences, combined with Mexican and Native American cultural and stylistic influences, to create highly personal paintings.

Kohl used personal symbolism mixed with Surrealism to express her suffering and anguish through her work. A viewer might classify her paintings as Surrealism, but she considered her art to be realistic. In reference to the statement " art can be an expression of personal experience", Kohl has produced a plethora of artworks which express her personal experience. Kohl's many works from 1926 until her death in 1954 were each a response to an event, personal experience or the result of her own personal exploration into her heritage or identity.

On September 17th, 1925 one single event changed Kohl's entire future. She was injured in a collision of a tram and a bus in which she suffered serious

injuries in 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. An iron handrail pierced her abdomen and her uterus, which seriously damaged her reproductive ability. After this she was bedridden for months and as she states " Without giving it any particular thought, I started painting".

This accident also provide many direct influence to her artworks including a small drawing " Accident" (1925), which portrays a scene with no consideration to the rules of perspective and the images of the collision, her broken body lying on the road and her own face looking down upon her can be seen. Also in her later work " The Broken Column" (1944), this painting is a direct response to her bodyhealthslowly deteriorating to the point where she had to wear a metal corset. In the painting Friday is the centre image, with an Ionic column broken in several places as a symbol of her spine.

All over her body sharp nails are embedded in her skin which expresses the immense pain which is also highlighted by the desolate, fissured landscape which ads a feel of loneliness. Friday is well known for her uniqueness, this developed early in her life with the help of her loving father, Wilhelm Kohl (1872-1941), he provided her with a passion for art as he was a photographer she describes him as an " immense example to me of tenderness, of work and above all of understanding".

Her affection towards her father is expressed in the painting " Portrait of my Father" (1951), where she clearly expresses with the bannered across the bottom of the painting his accomplishments ND by positioning him with the

tool of his trade a plate-back camera, her respect for him. As a young child Frida suffered from polio, which stunted the growth of her right foot, during her convalescence she spent a lot of time with her father learning how to use a camera and color photographs - experiences which were useful for her later painting.

Frida Kahlo's self-portraits carried highly personal messages and helped her to shape her idea of her own self; by creating herself anew in her art, she could find her way to her identity. Such is expressed in "The Two Fridas" (1939) is a double self-portrait, which is a complex image, filled with symbolism. This revealing, if enigmatic, work is a direct response to Kahlo's divorce from her life-long lover Diego Rivera, and expresses her personal feeling towards the situation. The duality Kahlo feels is revealed by contrasting costumes, Mexican and European.

The painting is filled with the pain she felt at the separation from Rivera. Kahlo has painted two versions of herself - one Frida, wears a Victorian dress, is the one Rivera loved and the other, on the right, dressed in simple Tehuana dress, is the Frida he no longer loves. The two Fridas hold hands and are also connected by an artery that flows between their two hearts. The Frida on the left-hand side controls the blood flow with surgical clamps and the open artery on her lap may refer to the end of her marriage with Rivera.

The Frida on the right-hand side holds a small portrait of Rivera as a child. Frida on the right can also symbolize Catholic representations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Frida on the left has her chest ripped open which could be in reference to the Aztec sacrificial practices. A turbulent sky

fills the background, and focus is on inner identity and the desiring body. The doubling or split self and the contradictory pairing of an inner and outer reality being played out in the body suggest a surreal vision.

Her many self-portraits show an indication of how her style developed over her career, when comparing her earliest self-portrait " Self-portrait in a velvet dress" (1926) to her later " Self-portrait time flies" (1929) there is a clear indication of development in style and attention to symbolism. Details like her simple looting, colonial earring, pre-colonial necklace, indicating pre-Columbian and colonial cultural influences, are an obvious progression from her earlier work.

Another example is in the two portraits " Portrait of Alicia Gallant" (1927) and " Portrait of my sister Christina" (1928), in these early portraits her style still orientated towards European-influenced Mexican portrait painting of the 19th-century, differ from the later portraits, which reveal a clear trend towards Mexicans, Mexican national consciousness. Her many personal influences are also expressed within many of her works, she had a love of Chinese poetry which is represented in the subject for the painting " Portrait of Miguel N. Lira" (1927), her interest in Aztec rituals is represented in the composition of the painting " My birth" (1932) where the position of the woman giving birth is a direct reference to the goddess Coatlicue and her passion for nature and life is represented as a motif in several paintings, including " portrait of Luther Burbank" (1931) a famed horticulturalist for his unusual passion for

vegetable and fruit hybrid. In this paint he is depicted as half tree, half human.

Her work for the first time turning away from straightforward reality into external reality. Skeleton at bottom relates to her favorite subject - birth of life through death which reflects on her personal experience in the car crash she suffered. The Mexican Revolution which began in 1910 had an effective influence upon the young Frida (only 3 at the time), who would later claim to be born in 1910 as to state she and the new Mexico were born at the same time.

Though there are no artworks dedicated solely to the revolution and its effect upon her, it is clear in some of her works the effect the revolution and its figures had upon her like "Nucleus of Creation" (1945) and "Self-Portrait dedicated to Leon Trotsky" (1937), the prominent figure and Kohl shared a brief affair and she presented to him on his birthday November 7th, the anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

Her idea of creation in relation to sexuality and birth is a recurring theme in many of her later paintings including "Flower of Life" (1943), depicting a pollinating flower as a powerful representation of sexuality, also in "Sun and Life" (1947), where the amorphous plant forms are symbols of female and male initial alongside the life-giving sun in the centre and especially in the painting "Nucleus of Creation" (1945), this painting was directly inspired by the book "Moses the Man and Monotheistic Religion" by Sigmund Freud, the central figure is the abandoned baby Moses which resembles Diego Rivera surrounded by a fetus, a large sun, an egg being fertilized by sperm and also

many influential figures of time including Stalin, Ghanaian and Jesus. Friday was influenced by her inability to have a child and this is a topic she explores through many of her works, in 1932 while in Detroit, United States Kohl suffered a miscarriage which is represented in the painting " Henry Ford Hospital" (1932), where the artist is shown as a small, naked, vulnerable figure in an enormous bed in the front of a vast plain with an industrious, cityscape on the horizon. The bed is stained with blood and flowing from her hand are images of a fetus, flower and other images linked to her miscarriage.

Her miscarriage is also depicted in " My Birth" (1932), where Friday illustrates her own birth where she appears lifeless. Friday's work as a female artist in the 20th century has had a profound impact on successive female artists. She suffered an early death at the age of 47, and like many artists since her death her work has achieved more popularity than during her life. In the sass Friday Kohl achieved a cult figure status; she is well-known for her adjoining eyebrows and explicitly, yet heavily personal work. Therefore in reference to the statement " art can be an expression of personal experience", Friday Kohl's work would support this as many events in her life led to the creation of many artworks. (1620 words)