



**FRIDA  
KAHLO**  
ART·GARDEN·LIFE

MAY 16 – NOVEMBER 1, 2015

Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. © 2014 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

## THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

**FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life,  
NYBG's Major 2015 Exhibition, Features an Evocation  
of the Artist's Garden and Studio, Along with  
More Than a Dozen Original Works**

NEW YORK—The first solo presentation of artist Frida Kahlo's work in New York City in more than 10 years, *FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life*, focuses on the artist's engagement with nature in her native country of Mexico, as seen in her garden and decoration of her home, as well as her complex use of plant imagery in her painting. On view from May 16 through November 1, 2015, The New York Botanical Garden's exhibition is the first to focus exclusively on Kahlo's intense interest in the botanical world.

Guest curated by distinguished art historian and specialist in Mexican art, Adriana Zavala, Ph.D., the exhibition transforms many of The New York Botanical Garden's spaces and gardens. It reimagines Kahlo's studio and garden at the Casa Azul (Blue House) in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory and includes a rare display of more than a dozen original paintings and drawings on view in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library's Art Gallery.

Accompanying programs invite visitors to learn about Kahlo's Mexico in new ways through poetry, lectures, Mexican-inspired shopping and dining experiences, and hands-on activities for kids. Bilingual texts in English and Spanish provide historical and cultural background, with photos of the garden as it appeared during Kahlo's lifetime.

"FRIDA KAHLO: *Art, Garden, Life* will be a one-of-a-kind exhibition that will provide an in-depth look at Kahlo's work and artistic environment and also celebrate the energy and sophistication of Mexican culture," explains Gregory Long, CEO and The William C. Steere Sr. President of the Garden. "Frida Kahlo is a profoundly important artist whose work reflects the complexity of the artist's life and times. The Garden is proud to present this focused look at Kahlo's work, which examines how it was influenced by nature."

"It has been a tremendous privilege to work with the team at The New York Botanical Garden to bring *FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life* to fruition," notes Guest Curator Adriana Zavala, Ph.D., "As a scholar and ambassador of Mexican culture, I am proud that this exhibition will enrich our understanding of Frida Kahlo's connection not just to her native Mexico but to the natural world overall. The research that has gone into building this multifaceted project demonstrates that Kahlo's life, her times, and her work were, like the natural world itself, a crossroads of transcultural influences."

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### THE GARDEN AND STUDIO AT THE CASA AZUL: CONSERVATORY EXHIBITION

The landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory at The New York Botanical Garden comes alive with the colors and textures of Frida Kahlo's Mexico. Visitors entering the exhibition view a reimagined version of Kahlo's garden at the Casa Azul (Blue House), today the Museo Frida Kahlo, the artist's lifelong home outside of Mexico City, which she transformed with traditional Mexican folk-art objects, colonial-era art, religious *ex-voto* paintings, and native Mexican plants. Passing through the indigo-blue walls with embellishments in sienna and green, visitors stroll along paths lined with flowers, showcasing a variety of important garden plants from Mexico. A scale version of the pyramid at the Casa Azul—originally created to display pre-Hispanic art collected by Kahlo's husband, famed muralist Diego Rivera—showcases traditional terra-cotta pots filled with Mexican cacti and succulents. A niche adjacent to the pyramid contains a desk and easel, reminding visitors that Kahlo's work in her studio was intertwined with her life in her garden. Visitors to the Conservatory experience the Casa Azul as an expression of Kahlo's deep connection to the natural world and to Mexico.



Gisèle Freund, *Frida in the Garden, Casa Azul* 1951.  
Courtesy Throckmorton Fine Arts  
Photo: Gisèle Freund/IMEC/Fonds MCC

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## KAHLO'S WORKS ON VIEW: ART GALLERY EXHIBITION

The LuEsther T. Mertz Library's Art Gallery at the Garden exhibits 14 of Kahlo's paintings and works on paper—many borrowed from private collections—highlighting the artist's use of botanical imagery in her work. Focusing on her lesser-known yet equally spectacular still lifes, as well as works that engage nature in unusually symbolic ways, this grouping of artworks includes *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird* (1940); *Flower of Life* (1944); *Still Life with Parrot and Flag* (1951); and *Self-Portrait Inside a Sunflower* (1954).

The Art Gallery exhibition, curated by Dr. Zavala, introduces visitors to the importance of plants and nature in Kahlo's paintings and her life. Also on view are large-scale photographs of Kahlo and the Casa Azul's garden, which are complemented by photographs of Kahlo taken by photographers and friends such as Nickolas Muray.



*Portrait of Luther Burbank*, 1931. Museo Dolores Olmedo, Xochimilco, Mexico © 2015 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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## THE TWO FRIDAS

An installation of specially commissioned artwork by contemporary Artist in Residence, Humberto Spíndola, is on display in the Britton Rotunda of the Library building. Spíndola, who specializes in sculptural works in paper inspired by Kahlo and her home at the Casa Azul, has re-created an installation of paper dresses that first debuted at the Museo Frida Kahlo in Mexico City in 2009. Inspired by Kahlo's double self-portrait *The Two Fridas* (1939), Spíndola re-creates her iconic dresses using a *trompe l'oeil* effect that closely resembles fabric. He employs acid-free tissue paper and light-resistant pigments to create long-lasting works of fine art evoking traditional 17th- and 18th-century Mexican craft techniques.

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## THE MEXICO CITY OF FRIDA AND DIEGO

A fascinating panel exhibition in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery highlights the museums and other destinations in Mexico City where Kahlo's and Rivera's artwork and other artifacts can be viewed, conveying the story and scope of their artistic and intellectual contributions to the cultural life of the city. Sites include Kahlo's home, the Casa Azul (today the Museo Frida Kahlo); the pair of functionalist structures designed for Rivera and Kahlo by Juan O'Gorman in 1931–32 in San Ángel (today the Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo); the Museo Dolores Olmedo; the Museo Anahuacalli, which houses Rivera's extensive collection of pre-Hispanic art; and various sites of Rivera's murals, including the Secretaría de Educación Pública, Palacio Nacional, Palacio de Bellas Artes, and the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso.

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## POETRY FOR EVERY SEASON: OCTAVIO PAZ POETRY WALK

The poems of important 20th-century Mexican poet and Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz (1914–98), many referencing native plants and flowers, are displayed adjacent to the Haupt Conservatory amid the seasonal beauty of the Garden's own collections. Co-presented with the Poetry Society of America, the Octavio Paz Poetry Walk is a continuation of the Garden's Poetry for Every Season series. On Saturday, September 19, at 2 p.m., Poetry Walk curator Rachel Eliza Griffiths, whose work has been influenced by both Paz and Kahlo, will present a reading of selected poems in the Ross Hall.

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## PROGRAMMING THROUGHOUT THE GARDEN

A wide range of complementary programs includes weekend music and dance performances ranging in genre from folk to mariachi to contemporary, led up by Artists-in Residence The Villalobos Brothers; **Frida al Fresco** evenings, when the exhibition will be open late, with live music, cocktails, and Mexican-inspired dinner menus; textile demonstrations by female artisans from Chiapas and Oaxaca; a self-guided Mexican Plant Tour showcasing plants native to Mexico that are located in the various collections throughout the Garden's 250 acres; and an informative look into the botany, craftsmanship, and rich history and traditions of one of the world's favorite spirits—tequila—with a spotlight on agave, the plant that is used in its production.

Events include a symposium entitled **Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera—Mexican Art in the 20th Century** and two special evening lectures by Kahlo scholars; a Mexican film series; and themed cultural celebrations. Special programming for children and families features **Frida's Flora and Fauna** with a scavenger hunt, interactive puppet theater, and botanical science activities, as well as **Cooking with Frida** with demonstrations featuring Mexican cuisine.

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## THE MOBILE GUIDE

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Garden has developed the *FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life* Mobile Guide for smartphones, with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies. On-site and virtual visitors are encouraged to explore Kahlo's home, the Casa Azul, through images, audio content, and videos, and to learn about the plant life depicted in her paintings. A virtual tour of the entire exhibition combines archival and contemporary photographs as well as a current-day video of the Casa Azul. Reproductions of Kahlo's paintings, including those on view at the Garden as well as those in the collections of other institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, are presented along with information about the cultural and medicinal significance of the plants to Kahlo's work. Users are able to take selfies and transform their likenesses into Kahlo-esque self-portraits—with the addition of flora, fauna, and signature accessories that are recognizable in Kahlo's work—which can be shared on social media.

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## COMPANION VOLUME TO THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition is accompanied by a 136-page, full-color book, *Frida Kahlo's Garden*, distributed in partnership with DelMonico Books/Prestel. This publication is available in hardcover and magazine editions at Shop in the Garden. Content includes essays by Guest Curator Dr. Adriana Zavala, Dr. Kathryn O'Rourke, Dr. Robert Bye, Edelmira Linares, Juan Rafael Coronel Rivera, and others, as well as a fully illustrated artwork checklist and a rich assortment of archival and contemporary photographs.

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## ABOUT FRIDA KAHLO, HER WORK, HER GARDEN

Frida Kahlo (1907–54), revered as one of the most significant artists of the 20th century, has risen to prominence over the past three decades as an international symbol of Mexican and feminist identity. Important aspects of her life's story, including her tumultuous relationship with her husband, muralist Diego Rivera (1886–1957), and her struggle with injury and illness, are well known and have been documented in countless biographies, exhibitions, fictional accounts, and analyses of her art. *FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life* will add to this legacy by showcasing the artist's love of Mexican plants and nature.

Of Kahlo's approximately 250 works, 55 are self-portraits, and many more are portraits of friends and colleagues, including art patrons. Many of these portraits incorporate plants, animals, and other living things. In her still-life paintings, Kahlo depicts a variety of fruit and flowers, including many native to Mexico, alongside animals, Mexican folk art, and pre-Hispanic objects. Kahlo's inclusion of plants and nature in her work spans her entire career but her most intensive dedication to the still-life genre dates to the 1940s and 1950s, particularly as her health declined and she was increasingly confined to her home and garden, which underwent its most significant period of development during the 1930s and 1940s.

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#### ABOUT GUEST CURATOR DR. ADRIANA ZAVALA

Adriana Zavala, Ph.D., Associate Professor of modern and contemporary Latin American art history and Director of Latino Studies at Tufts University, has published widely on Mexican art. Her book *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition: Women, Gender, and Representation in Mexican Art* (Penn State University Press, 2010) was awarded the Arvey Prize by the Association for Latin American Art in 2011. She has also curated several exhibitions, including *Lola Álvarez Bravo: The Photography of an Era*, shown at the Diego Rivera Studio Museum, Mexico City (2010); the Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, California (2011); and in expanded form at the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona (2013); *Mexico Beyond Its Revolution* for the Tufts University Art Gallery, Medford, Massachusetts (2010); and *Maria Izquierdo: Un Arte Nuevo* for the Blaisten Collection at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (2007).

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*FRIDA KAHLO: Art, Garden, Life* is The New York Botanical Garden's current installation within the ambitious exhibition program created to explore the gardening lives of cultural figures such as Charles Darwin, Emily Dickinson, and Claude Monet and the intersection of art and nature—an approach that had never been executed at a botanical garden. These comprehensive flower shows in the Haupt Conservatory evoke their gardens and are accompanied by exhibitions in the Mertz Library's Art Gallery.

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## EXHIBITION DONORS

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*Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org).

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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