



NEW ARKEN SHOW LOOKS BEHIND THE FRIDA KAHLO MYTH

A powerful gaze, heavy eyebrows, downy upper lip, eye-catching dresses and artistic hairstyles – Frida Kahlo’s distinctive features will be familiar to most. Including herself in her art in new and active ways, Kahlo was a modern-art pioneer with a place in art history alongside Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso. All told, she painted only around 150 canvases before dying at age 47. Now, ARKEN has gathered some of Kahlo’s most iconic works, which have never before been seen in Denmark, for an exhibition opening on 7 September.

ARKEN is calling a press conference on the exhibition for Wednesday, 4 September, at 11 am. After a welcome by ARKEN Director Christian Gether, Curator Naja Rasmussen will introduce the show. The press conference will be followed by lunch in the ARKEN Café.

To attend, please respond by Friday 30 August, 12 noon, to lea.bolvig@arken.dk

Self-staging as artistic strategy

ARKEN’s exhibition *FRIDA KAHLO – A Life in Art* shows how the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) created and staged her identity through her art. In light of her exceptionally colourful personal life, Kahlo’s paintings have often been viewed as direct representations of her own life. But the works are more than just testimonies of private events and personal experiences, they are highly staged artworks created by one of the most dramatic women of the modern age. Offering a window into Kahlo’s life and art, *FRIDA KAHLO – A Life in Art* zeroes in on her use of self-representation and self-staging as an artistic method. The artist’s self-portraits are the main reason for the nearly cult-like idolization of her today. Outright “Fridamania” is manifested in the Hollywood film *Frida*, starring Salma Hayek, which has become an integrated part of popular culture across the West. This film and the documentary *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo* will be screened daily during the exhibition.

Frida Kahlo and her times

Kahlo’s self-staging was part of a general trend in Mexico at the time, revolving around the construction of a new national identity after years of colonization and oppression. The exhibition makes this clear through works by Frida Kahlo’s husband, the painter Diego Rivera, and other

Mexican artists like José Clemente Orozco, Juan Soriano and María Izquierdo, who were all part of the Mexican Renaissance. Selected photographs of Kahlo show how she actively shaped her image in a stream of portraits shot by the leading, most celebrated photographers of her day. Including pages from her diary, drawings, historical film clips, pre-Columbian sculpture, Mexican dresses and jewellery, the exhibition widens our understanding of the artist's self-staging.

Catalogue

ARKEN, in partnership with Hatje Cantz Publishers, is putting out a richly illustrated catalogue in English, German and Danish. The catalogue features essays by internationally respected scholars and art theorists, including Griselda Pollock and Mieke Bal, who from different angles reveal new aspects of Kahlo's visual language, sources of inspiration, cultural times and personal history. Helga Prignitz-Poda analyzes her complex visual language, while Laura Gonzáles Matute presents Kahlo's Mexican modernism. Stine Høholt of ARKEN introduces the exhibition's focus on Kahlo's self-staging based on her visual play with the codes of gender and culture.

The catalogue has 112 pages, 68 illustrations and costs DKK 99.

FRIDA KAHLO – A Life in Art runs until 12 January 2014.

Press photos

The attached press photos can be used for editorial coverage prior to or during the exhibition period.

Photo credits:

Frida Kahlo, *Self-portrait with Monkeys*, 1943. The Vergel Foundation © 2013 Banco de México Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / billedkunst.dk

Frida Kahlo, *Self-portrait as Tehuana or Diego on My Mind*, 1943. The Vergel Foundation © 2013 Banco de México Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / billedkunst.dk

Frida Kahlo, *Self-portrait with Necklace*, 1933. The Vergel Foundation © 2013 Banco de México Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / billedkunst.dk

Bernice Silberstein, *Frida with flowers in her hair*, ca. 1940. Photo: Throckmorton Fine Art

Nickolas Muray, *Frida on White Bench*, 1939. Photo: Nickolas Muray, © Nickolas Muray Photo Archives

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