

Examining Frida Kahlo's Self-portraits from the Perspective of Psychoanalysis

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Abstract Since 50 works out of 143 known paintings by “Frida Kahlo” have been devoted to her “self-portraits”, this subject made us believe that self-portraits are of paramount significance among her works. Self-portrait could include many complexities mentally; hence, they are most associated with psychoanalysis. So examining Kahlo's self-portraits psychoanalytically will open up to us new aspects of these self-portraits. Our main idea was that, Kahlo's self-portraits –not necessarily from a mere feminine narcissism standpoint of the painter – are indicative of ups and downs in her life. On this ground, we were able to comprehend self-portraits as “self-imaging” and suppositional that Kahlo felt towards her own self. This engenders that, she goes beyond the mere representation of her face, and remain loyal to her inner consciousness and imagination.

Keywords Frida Kahlo, Psychoanalysis, Self-portrait, Self-imaging, Representation

1. Introduction

The relationship between truth and beauty within all art contexts has always been complicatedly controversial. When going to the art theory, we encounter with the risk of interpretation and hermeneutics, which could keep us away from the art work itself. But the principle that most critics and theorists believe in, is that art is meaningless in its pure abstraction. When a work of art is created by an artist, it reflects all his mentalities and morale. This is the principle which distinguishes artist's works from the dynamics of art during history. Hence, the art of different geographic areas are clearly some distance apart[1]. The psychoanalytical critique states, each area and course in which an artist lives in has its own characteristics and, this forces us to go to the artist's individual and social events to have an appropriate understanding (not necessarily a complete one) of the works of him. In this way, we can discover the peculiar aesthetics of every artist.

An important issue in psychoanalysis critique in general and in this paper is that, we want to contribute to the philosophy of psychoanalysis –not to psychoanalysis itself. So, we are concerned with the theoretic agenda exclusively and we don't enter in a technical field into which Psychoanalysis has been converted. Now it should be seen

whether taking such an approach with regards to psychoanalysis is possible? To answer to this question, one needs to refer to the Herbert Markoz's theories in the book “Eros and Civilization” as he regard Freud: “Freud developed a theory about human and the psychological science as such. Freud with this theory placed himself under the philosophical criteria within the great tradition of the philosophy”[2]. To us what are important are the connotative and the aesthetical significance of the Freudian concepts not the appropriate interpretation of them. Freud distinguished his philosophy from science meticulously. We then, examine and investigate the Frida Kahlo's works based on the same philosophy and the psychoanalytical theory. For this purpose, we deal with the category of fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis employed in line with the aesthetical studies. In the end, based on the psychoanalytical fundamental concepts, we try to shed light on the new aspects of Kahlo's self-portraits [2].

2. Life Chronicle and Events Affecting Kahlo's Life

Frida Kahlo was born on July 6, 1907, in a small town called Koyoakan surrounding Mexico. His father was a German- Jewish painter and photographer with a Romanian origin. At 6, she was afflicted with polio and remained hospitalized for almost a year. This illness crippled her and one of her foot remained shorter than the other. The mutilation tormented her for the rest of her life[3]. In 1925,

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when she was 18, a horrific bus crash changed her life. Her survival with multiple fracture of the pelvis, ribs, vertebrae of the neck and eleven crush fracture in the right leg that she sustained, seemed a miracle. Though Kahlo returned to her normal life after several months, the mental and bodily effects were so deep[3]. These are the things that cause us to call her an introverted person psychoanalytically, who was seeking for her own inner status and mentalities and trying to portray her desire, wishes, frustrations in her self-portraits. Frida's paintings reflect her personal experiences and life. Her paintings have a strong emphasis on women's suffering and a rough life facing them. Of 143 paintings she's drawn, 54 of them are self-portraits. Kahlo's portraits of herself are associated with personal concepts and symbols. On other hand, the Mexican culture has had a great influence on Kahlo and this is clearly evident in her paintings [3]. But Kahlo's self-portraits transcend the painter's feminine narcissism as ketoferVaberr states: "Frida in her paintings pictured herself and her life in such a way that no one had even used in self-portraits form within the history of art. It was unprecedented for someone to picture the character and his existence with such a complex style and live the life he has ever imagined for himself. This was Kahlo's only achievement".[4]. Frida was raised with three blood sisters and two half-sisters in a completely feminine environment. She, like other artists were affected by social movements around her. When she was 3, the Mexican civil war began. As time passed she employed indigenous Mexican colors and symbols in her paintings, In this regard, we can say the inherent and personal duality of Frida Kahlo have partly reflected the antagonistic and dualistic identity of her changing society. Kahlo has derived most of duality elements from the heart of Aztec dualistic cultures and ancient eastern rituals, and has intensified their symbolic influence. Heat and cold, light and darkness, day and night, the moon and the sun, form(spirit) and matter, male and female essence..... This duality has been pictured evidently in the famous painting of "Two Fridas" which is her greatest painting. She speaks of herself: "I see a woman with one unified existence in the form of two bodies. Her existence is split. Incompatible elements of two European and Mexican identities have given body and soul to each of them. On the right, we see the modern Frida with all trappings and modern interests[5]. She in her most of works employing mythological symbols and motifs including soil (earth mother), root, hair, blood, has defended indigenous and tradition structures against bourgeois' aggression. Loyalty to the homeland with warm coloring (pigment), soft and harmonious combinations contrasts sharply with capital world being cold, hard and rough. Generally speaking, we can say Kahlo has been an original and unique artist having no relation with schools of arts and traditions.

3. On Psychoanalysis and Defining Its Main Concepts

Throughout the history of psychoanalysis besides the

many efforts done for many years in psychology, the beginning of psychology as we know it today has been attributed to "Sigmund Freud". Raising the issue of "unconscious", Freud founded psychoanalysis. He replaced the hypnotic method by his psychology predecessors like Broer and the medical procedures with "free association". Accordingly, he adopted an unprecedented plan, which consisted of simple questions being put to a man whose mind was sick by telling the patient "say whatever come to your mind"[6]. In this situation, the patient describes his auto-biography to the psychoanalyst. The first and most important psychoanalysis concept we encounter, is sensual ego or subject. Sensual ego means the human existence in its entirety; which means the conscious and unconscious minds of every individual. Psychoanalysis states that our unconsciousness play an important role in what we do and the so-called sensual ego is senseless without the unconsciousness. Most of the time, the man's unconsciousness not at the moment of action, but after doing it, is able to analyze its action. Psychoanalysis finds art in a close relationship with man's unconsciousness, which appears by the time the art is created. Hence the consciousness comes in as a means of interpreting, after the work of art is created. We can say in psychoanalysis sensual ego is the result of the combination of people's consciousness and unconsciousness[7]. It should now be seen, how the subject is formed from the viewpoint of psychoanalysis? Psychoanalysis traces the subject, when it is formed at the childhood stage. To illustrate this claim, three other major concepts in psychoanalysis including "the real world", "the imaginative world", and "the symbolic world" should be described. (The classification was later conducted by Jacques Lacan under Freud's teachings). Sensual ego starts to shape in childhood. The child sees his own picture in the mirror. This picture is actually his reality. But Freudian psychoanalysis postulates a complex (obsession) to be in the child, which is the result of a lack of sex.

Psychoanalysis calls this complex "Oedipus complex" metaphorically, and relates it to the father. Perhaps an example could explain this to us. Imagine a child whose father is an army service man. Here, the benchmark subject for the child is the powerful image of his military father. He stands by the mirror and puts on the military hat, trying to picture in his mind a symbolic similarity of his father. (This process is called identity adaptation in psychoanalysis). So, we can say the symbolic world or the father's image is a set of rules from an external system governing the child and trying to impose itself on him. This system shapes his sensual ego in compliance with the general criteria[8]. The symbolic world has been portrayed by father metaphorically. Hence, this position can be filled by others too. The subject in his mind identifies himself with them. Concerning Frida, this favorite subject is her husband Rivera. The imaginative world acts as an interface like a mirror to get the child to become one with his iconic image. The child passes his reality through the mirror, and becomes aware of the symbolic world, gradually recovering himself within a

sensual ego or subject. The child becomes familiar with his image and the other through the mirror. Like a mirror, self-portraits sometimes play the role of such an interface. The focus of these general investigations is to find out where we can trace an artists' sensual ego and how we should through this approach deal with the unconsciousness interpretation of the artist which has an immediate and direct role in the creating of his work?

Freudian pleasure principle and reality principle

Two very important concepts in the Freudian psychoanalysis, which have played major roles in aesthetics following him, are: "pleasure principle" and "reality principle". To determine the pleasure principle and the reality principle psychoanalytically in Frida Kahlo's works, we need to define them from the Freudian perspective. To Freud, the human history is the history of human oppression. Culture not only prevents the social existence of man but also prevents his biological existence. It not only deters parts of human existence but also prevents him from his instinctual structure[9]. But for Freud, this prevention is regarded a necessary condition for progress and improvement. For basic human instincts to freely pursue his goals and objectives, they will be in conflict with any accrued and sustainable preservation: even when they become unified, they are destructive. Like its deadly counterpart -death instinct- the uncontrolled Eros is deadly too. The destructive power of these two comes from the fact that, they struggle to be satisfied which culture cannot provide them with: Being satisfied at any moment is strictly an end in itself. So instincts must divert from their purpose, and be kept away from it. Once a civilization begins, when the primary goal –the total satisfaction of all needs-is essentially ignored and relinquished. Freud describes this transformation as the converting of the pleasure principle to the reality principle[9]. This distinction (between the two principles) is largely like the distinction between the conscious and unconscious processes. We can say, every individual possesses two different dimensions, which are characterized by different mental processes. The difference between these two dimensions is of genetic-chronological and structural: For Freud, the unconsciousness governed by the pleasure principle consists of "older and primary processes surviving from the stage of development in which they are kinds of mental processes themselves". At first, these processes "don't struggle unless for achieving pleasure: Mental and psychological activities keep away every act, causing unhappiness (pain)[9]. But the uncontrolled pleasure leads to the conflict with human and natural environment. It is understood, the satisfaction of needs, full and free from pain satisfaction is impossible. After the experiences of despair and disappointment, a new mental performance dominates or as Freud himself put it: The reality principle replaces the pleasure principle: Man learns to relinquish an unstable, withering and immediate pleasure so as to enjoy controlled and delayed pleasure knowingly. One can observe Frida Kahlo's involvement with a new form of civilization dominance in her works. Actually Kahlo's loyalty to the

pleasure principle and her unconsciousness on the one hand, and her return to the primitive civilizations and religions on the other hand, makes her to be considered a surrealist in the eye of most critics. The Breton's surrealism as it is clear from the manifesto, accepts Freud's definitions of man's unconscious desires, rebelling against the victimization of the civilization, and remains faithful to the human essence. They believe the victimization has shown its influence in technically advanced fields and courses of the civilization. They have virtually and completely turned to possessing and dominating the nature. Hence, compared to the past the needs of a large group of people are eliminated. No automation, homogenization of life, no mental improvement, no growing devastation to contemporary development ever provide an appropriate framework for drawing into question the principle of reality which has been governing the progress of the west civilization[10, 11].

Relationship between psychoanalysis and art As we mentioned, Freud believed the unconsciousness is always with man, and includes a set of man's experiences, and what he has seen and heard during his life. To him, the unconsciousness might apparently forget the set. Freud cites an example with regards to the way man's unconsciousness operates: Imagine a wax mole covered by a sheet of paper. It leaves no trace of what is written on the sheet. The written material immediately gets erased. Removing the sheet you'll see the material is carved on the wax mold. The mold is like the inner nature as well as the unconsciousness while the sheet of paper is like our consciousness[8]. Freud's thoughts concerning the unconsciousness and psychoanalysis as commentary on the patient's unconsciousness gradually found its way to art and aesthetics. And now we face a huge amount of psychoanalytical critique in art in which critics have interpreted artistic works by utilizing Freudian unconsciousness concept. This means bringing into question what man does (including art) and answering it will always depend on the relationship the man has between himself and his world: In other words ignoring the original human dimension, i. e, going away from his historical dimension, is a big obstacle in creating a genuine relationship with regards to him. For only it is human possessing the history and enjoying its signs. In this type of critique, the work of art is in a close relationship with authors 'or art creator's experiences and events happened to him. Unlike the formalist critique which bases the form of the work, the psychoanalysis deals with the theme of the work and its relation with the life of the author (subject). For art as a human action is derived from the consciousness and unconsciousness of the work's creator, and as it was explained, art includes a set of experiences and events the artist goes through in his life. The unconsciousness playing the main role in shaping the work could slip the artist's mind. But through investigating his life, one can trace the elements employed in the works in the artist's unconsciousness. This is actually the method Freud used in treating his own patients. "Through free association Freud advised his patients to return to the past continuously and write or describe what had happened to them. The

patient would have to focus on those points. Things often missed would come to the patient's mind through such methods and determining factors were revealed in his illness".[12]. Selecting psychoanalytical critique in investigating Kahlo's works is because of two main features which are quite evident in her works. First, the artist had many ups and downs in her life, and those events were so influential and determining mentally that are reflected in her paintings. The horrific crash in childhood, Kahlo experienced, falling in love with Rivera, the trip with him to America, and her second crash in teenage years, which caused one of her legs, all described her work courses and is embodied in her works. The second reason is that Frida devoted a large number of her works to self-portraits. As it was explained, she herself claimed: "I paint myself for I'm often alone. I know myself the most". Self-portraits are actually depicting the artist's image of his own self. Autobiography as a treatment recommended by Freud to his patients has a direct relationship with self-portraits. In self-portraits and in Kahlo's self-portraits in particular, we encounter with the characterization and artist's image of herself, not with the accurate representation by the artist. In psychoanalysis, autobiography is a method by which the psychoanalyst makes the patient's unconsciousness speaks out. Autobiography is a principle which tell us: "Say whatever comes to mind". A self-portrait is a reflection of the artist's mental happenings. In other words, self-portraits like autobiographies reflect and showcase the author's unconsciousness. Autobiographies are the key points by which the relationship between psychoanalysis and art can be explained[8].

Psychoanalytical reading of some Frida Kahlo's works psychoanalytically speaking; human's encounter with the world is always accompanied by the process of interpreting. The world in this situation is like an open book written and read by the process of experience. Here, the signified, and the ultimate meaning is postponed frequently[5]. In this regard psychoanalysis doesn't claim to get to an accurate interpretation of one painting with full respect of the creator's mind. However psychoanalysis works effectively in expanding, exploring, and interpreting the art. We're always concerned with footprints not with things themselves, ie, we deal with signs like the signs and the patient's dreams from which Freud could discover their unconsciousness. The thing itself is not always present while the footprint is there. This is also the case for painting. There are no ideas, subjects or artists (like Kahlo), but we deal with footprints and signs and of course an insight that Kahlo left behind in his paintings. For psychoanalysis, a work of art stands for producing significance. Especially the characteristic and expressive features, which exist in Kahlo's self-portraits, will lead us to a psychoanalytical explanation of them. As we have understood from the information based on Kahlo's life, one can argue these self-portraits characterize a stage of her real life. Now we can take steps within the course of interpreting and decoding of self-portraits based on the data and the characterization features existing in Kahlo's works.

In this way, every part and element that come out of her paintings could be interpreted as a sign of her unconsciousness, and this make them comprehensible to us even though the full understanding of these works are so difficult due to the man's unconscious complexities. Especially in Kahlo's case, whose art is basically personal and is combined with spicy streaks of sensuality, the expression of tragedy and sadness is laid at the heart of it. In her works, sadness is concrete and tangible, which often comes forth and is accompanied by grave regret and feelings. Kahlo's most important works are her self-portraits, which are to some a kind of closed and limited art in which narcissism reaches the utmost level[13]. Despite this reality, the human vision and the social awareness is clearly evident in Frida Kahlo's most private works. Historic consciousness towards the ethnic identity is amongst the enduring themes of her artistic creation. As a modern artist in a developing society, she had a rich history and was consistently involved in the institutions of her national culture. In line with the society direction towards the capitalist's new relations, she observed both a break up in the traditional structures and the destruction of the indigenous culture[13]. Based on these signs employed in her works, we can say that Frida Kahlo's personal and inherent duality has partly reflected the dualistic and antagonistic identity of her changing society. Kahlo has taken most of dual elements from the heart of the Aztec cultures and the ancient eastern rituals and has intensified their symbolic force: Cold and heat, light and darkness, day and night, the moon and the sun, form and the matter, male and female essence.... This duality has been pictured evidently in the famous painting of "Two Fridas" (picture no, 1) which is her greatest painting. She speaks of herself: "I see a woman with one unified existence in the form of two bodies. Her existence is split. Incompatible elements of two European and Mexican identities have given body and soul to each of them. The dominant techniques in Kahlo's works, is producing the sharp contrasts in lines, designs and colors maximizing the emotional and mental value as much as possible[13].

She, in most of her works employing mythological symbols and motifs including soil (earth mother), root, hair, blood, has defended indigenous and tradition structures against bourgeois' aggression. Loyalty to the homeland with warm coloring (pigment), soft and harmonious combinations contrasts sharply with the capital world being cold, hard and rough. Generally speaking, we can say Kahlo has been an original and unique artist having no relation with schools of arts and traditions. Despite this, one can recognize some of her artistic sources. Partly amateurish and non-academic designs in most Kahlo's works are a reminiscent of a direct expression and mysterious insight in the works of early painters. The Mexican indigenous art works and the ritual paintings of some peoples like Aztec, with stamps, icons and symbolic masks could be another source [5].

In the end, besides all the interpretations, what is important for psychoanalysis is the link between Kahlo's life and her works. So awareness of the life events of this artist

will partially help us in interpreting her works. For example, we investigate the painting “self-portrait with short hair” (*picture no,2*). Based on the available information of Kahlo’s life, we discover that she has drawn the picture, after separation with her husband Diego Rivera who was a Mexican painter. In most self-portraits, she’s drawn herself dressed in the Mexican traditional female clothes with long hair. But now –after leaving Rivera- she’s painted herself with short hair in shirts, shoes and men jackets, which are oversized and could belong to Rivera[5]. Short hair is a sign of Rivera. Kahlo has identified with Rivera by using the sign of short hair, even though a physical separation has occurred between them. In the way she has made up in his form, she can do conformity with Rivera in her imaginations. This mental imagination formed in her unconsciousness, is a sign of a loss that has occurred in her life. The Freudian psychoanalysis regarding this loss states: In early childhood an interest (connection) is formed between the child and the mother, and the moment of sucking milk by the child from the mother’s breast is as a sign of them becoming one. As he argues, if the mother gets separated from the child, the child begins to ruminate in the absence of his mother and this state associates the moment of milk sucking. The child actually wants to compensate the physical loss of his mother by doing so mentally[8]. In Freudian psychoanalysis, this loss has always been enshrined in man and its signs are clearly traceable. On this ground, Freud believes what the individual emphasize through his words and imaginations is what has been absent in his real life and reaching it appears to be difficult[5]. This work by Kahlo shows a loss of her beloved, whom she has sought to fill in her mind through the short hair. (This instance is like the child’s ruminating). On the other hand, the newly clipped tresses having a morbid feeling and a fluid state in the space must be related to Kahlo over Rivera’s leaving. This has drawn the painting closer to the dream-like surrealism environment. A Kahlo’s picture is also available in one of the catalogues of the art museum on top of which there is a lyric reading: “Behold, if I loved you it was because of your hair. Now that you have no hair there is no love between us”. In confirming this point, it is said that Kahlo has drawn a self-portrait of herself after remarrying with Rivera. This time around, she has drawn two strange wigs on the head as if she has again identified herself with him. (*Picture no, 3*). All these indicate that the picture Kahlo draws from her, has an expressive feature. It is a search by one to comprehend the other and interestingly the other representing in her works is she herself. Or as an example as we saw she has drawn the “Two Frida” beside each other in one of her mysterious works. That is a picture she’s drawn after her short-timed separation from Rivera. The picture is as if she has imagined an impressive moment, a moment at which man addresses himself and talks to himself. An impressive moment, as if man tells himself: Look Frida this is the picture of my unfaithful beloved. The other Frida with a bloody heart, whose roots are connected to her, remains silent and watches. Painting has a living structure in itself. A blank canvas, color and brush are mediums for retelling. But

Kahlo’s self-portraits are not just for retelling. From the moment the brush touches the canvas, the painter becomes involved in a process which takes his mind fully.

The happenings on the canvas are complex and beautiful like life, fully dialectical process. By adding every line, point and color, the basis of the work disarranges. In this state, the mind of the painter begins to investigate these changes, weighs them and builds anew. As the creator, the mind continues until it is acceptable for it. Meantime, the painter has been living with the entire changing world under his hand and brush. Art is truly the deepest, most complex and most interesting game human being has ever created and Frida has been so adept at it.

4. Conclusions

Based on Psychoanalytical concepts and inquiring into Kahlo's self-portraits, we can conclude these paintings are not sheer representation of the face (characterization of the face), but on back of them the artist’s inner thoughts and morale are hidden. Looking at Kahlo's’ works from a standpoint of psychoanalysis proved the fact, that there is an immediate and profound link between Kahlo's’ life and her works. This point directs us to learn that Kahlo's’ self-portraits not necessarily from a feminine narcissism point of view is a way through which, she struggles to discover herself. As she admitted concerning her self-portraits: What I perceive from paintings (portrayals) is not narcissism but an attempt to discover the truth and the beauty which is hidden in the image[3]. In general, Kahlo seeks for truth and tries to showcase its beauty.

Prior to photography and after it, self-portraits naturally encompassed a large part of the worlds' paintings. However, self-portraits exhibiting man's visage with all dimensions are not so many in the world. Here, one can see the difference between self-portraits and portraits. Similarity and the external form of the face has been considered in most of the portraits. While in Kahlo's self-portraits, the face is mixed with objects and other scenes, which often express the painter’s mental status which are not bound to the reality of the face itself. For this, we can say, this type of self-portraits could be the most difficult part of the world's paintings, because they represent the human image, which enjoy the highest complexity and sophistication among the worlds' images. An image man has of himself is not the one a mirror reflects and that’s why no one is pleased with the snapshot taken from him even though all face details are there. It dares to say, that self-portraits constitute the best portraits of the history. This is because the painter has the highest awareness and perception ever of himself. The advent of photography provided the opportunity to see to what extent painters' mental pictures are different from the pictures of the mirror-like picture after photography was invented. Self-portraits changed its nature in modern painting after photography was invented. This issue is due to a different perception the modern painter has had regarding his previous

paintings, and Kahlo was one of these painters. In modern times, photography has encompassed the role in image processing and authenticity. Hence, there is no need for the painting to deal with this function-an encumbrance-earlier painters had to shoulder "[14]. Frida's style in dealing with self-portraits is her own. The existence of objects helps her to get closer to her arbitrary composition. Even though, a small object like earrings donated by Picasso or an extra pair of hand with which one can prevent troublesome noise from reaching the ears[15]. Kahlo portrays her own image among object, nature and man-made artifacts, without which her paintings remain dumb and silent. She does this so naturally that in front of the existing objects, one can never perceive them to be artificial at all. Meantime she can cut across the borders in drawing portraits through these classifications. The nature is present in her works. She's drawn herself as part of the nature in her best works, this companion is so pleasant. However, in a world in which men are considered uniform and amorphous, self-portraying in it could be an important achievement. This is because of the fact that the artist can create a different pattern of life and thinking which could be a personal perception pattern of one human being with all his complexities and extreme dimensions of his being. Man possesses a rare, unknown & mysterious image. In the end, the painter's vicissitudes specially the accidents which Kahlo had at the early childhood and incidents she faced during teenage years, led her works to some kind of discontent regarding the existing life situation. Her familiarity with Rivera because of unsuitable life afflicted her with trauma. These events together made her give priority to her mental development. In this regard, drawing a large number of self-portraits affirm this subject. She pictured her self-portraits not from a narcissism perspective for their elegance but for strengthening her own self and to endure sufferings life had brought to her. In general, self-portraits are not similar with one another, which exhibit her indifferent mental status and situations[5]. As the paper suggests, the focus of these self-portraits is not to represent but to simulate kahlo's image so as to showcase her inner mental conditions. This issue leads us to psychoanalysis to investigate her works. Psychoanalytically speaking, these self-portraits are aimed at adapting the painter's identity with things who fell their loss in herself, for example, her using the element of tree in her works, is a sign of loss kahlo, felt because of her legs and her infertility. In fact parts of these self-portraits are drawn to compensate for such losses. In some others, kahlo's difficult life with her husband Rivera are reflected. Psychoanalytically, if we consider Rivera one of kahlo's desirable objects whose love for him was profound, we can discover the real lack of a faithful husband is clearly seen in her works. She attempts to identify with him by drawing Rivera's face along her own face. For example in "self-portrait with short hair", she shows herself in Rivera's body to become one with him & internalize him in her. Apart from these main items, other things can be seen in her works. For instance, her distaste for a modern culture that she experienced in her stay in San

Francisco specifically makes her pay tribute to her primitive and indigenous culture. She draws primitive-ritual elements including iconic items which appear in the form of animals like monkeys in all of her paintings. If we regard ritual elements and primitive culture as kahlo's mentally desirable objects from a psychoanalytical perspective, we can assume she's tried through these elements to identify with them in her imaginative world to make up for their loss. One can discover similarities between her and surrealism through such approaches with self-portraits. Breton regarded kahlo an "innate" surrealist.

He would always regard her works as "the intersection of artistic & political facts which we always desire their oneness within the awareness of a revolutionary unit"[5].

Breton in fact would idealize and romanticize the revolution in which kahlo was living. What Breton deemed a mental obsession was something Kahlo had experienced as routine life activities? Her unconscious orientation towards Surrealism and her instinct-driven approach was her obvious difference with the painters of that period. Generally – speaking, we can say through words & images surrealists sought to extract phenomenal facts from exotic, unconscious and sensual sources of mind. While those phenomenal facts would form kahlo's everyday life. It is based on this fact, that the role psychoanalysis plays in kahlo's mind for investigating her works is highlighted. Her paintings are taken from her life facts and aspirations, which are pictured by the artist's unconsciousness.

The fact that kahlo's works are bizarre is because she doesn't succumb to a routine life, and goes beyond a world where her status is iconic and fixed. Sufferings she underwent in her life caused her to rebel against a modern, dominant and male culture unconsciously.

As we saw, psychoanalysis helps us understand the causes of this conflicting force. Blood as a conflicting force and the element of root as the female fertility force in kahlo's works are more evident.

The element of root is highlighted most in her works because of kahlo's infertility and fear of discontinuity of her generation.

Another element seen in kahlo's works, is her using of religious elements both in form and in content. In her works form, we observe that she chooses her work's dimensions as the size of votive paintings. On the other hand she uses the content of iconic expressiveness and religious elements in her works. But what is important is the point that although religious paintings enjoy iconic and metaphoric elements, a mode of expressiveness comes to the surface in them and that's because of the religious quotes and saying with which people are familiar. In other words religious paintings describe a narration vividly which is etched in the other's minds out of the painting itself. But kahlo's paintings are personal simulation that are in a direct relation with the artist's inner thought and conjugated with her life[13].

In the end, one can say, self-portraits whose benchmark hasn't been a mere simulation have the highest connection with the inner thoughts of the artist. For this purpose since

psychoanalysis is defined an man's unconscious analysis can help us to comprehend this artist's works and get us closer to the principle of reality of her paintings.

Attached Images



Figure (1). Title: Two Frida (1939) Technique: Oil on canvas (5/173- 173 cm). [https://www.google.com# image& Frida kahlo](https://www.google.com#image&Frida%20kahlo)

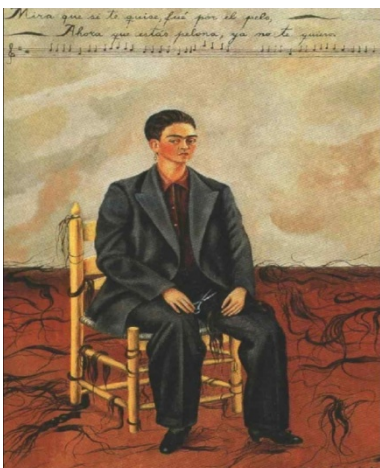


Figure (2). Title: Auto portraits with short hair (1940) Technique: Oil on canvas (40 to 28 cm). [https://www.google.com# image& Frida kahlo](https://www.google.com#image&Frida%20kahlo)



Figure (3). Name of work: paintings, with their wigs (1941) Technique: oil on hard fiber (7/38-51). [https://www.google.com# image& Frida kahlo](https://www.google.com#image&Frida%20kahlo)

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