

The cover features a reproduction of Frida Kahlo's painting 'Self-Portrait with Two Monkeys'. Frida Kahlo is depicted from the chest up, wearing a white blouse with a red braided necklace. She has a serious expression and her hair is styled in her signature braided updo. Two black monkeys are perched on her shoulders, one on each side. A large, vibrant flower with yellow and red petals is positioned behind her head. The background is a mix of warm, earthy tones.

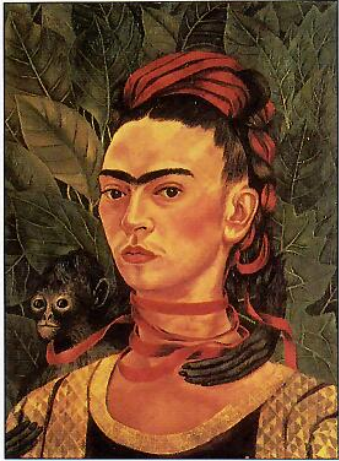
art & man

MARCH 1991, VOL. 21, NO. 5, ISSN 0004-3052
PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC UNDER THE DIRECTION
OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

MEXICAN ART

FEATURING
FRIDA KAHLO

 SCHOLASTIC



HAYDEN HERRERA

Above: *Self-Portrait with Monkey*, 1940.
Cover: *Frida Kahlo (1907-1954). Self-Portrait with Monkeys* (detail), 1943. Private collection.

art & man

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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POSTAL INFORMATION

Art & Man (ISSN 0004-3052; in Canada, 2-c no. 9360) is published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov., Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc., 351 Garver Rd., P.O. Box 2700, Monroe, OH 45050-2700. Second-class postage paid at Monroe, OH 45050-9998 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTERS: Send notice of address changes to ART & MAN, 2931 East McCarty St. P.O. Box 3710 Jefferson City, MO, 65102-3710.

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

U.S. prices: \$6.50 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$13.00 student, \$21.00 Teachers' Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$1.75 student, \$3.50 Teachers'. (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian office, address below.) Second-class postage paid at Monroe, OH 45050-9998 and at additional mailing offices. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to ART & MAN, Scholastic Inc., 2931 East McCarty Street, P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-9957. Canadian address: Scholastic-TAB Publications, Ltd., 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 3G5. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc. 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1991 by Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Material in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher.

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Faces of



Compare the faces above, done over 13 centuries ago, with the others on these pages.

Flanged Cylinder, c. 690. Ceramic, 28" high. Temple of the Foliated Cross, Palenque. Institute of Tabasco.

Mexico

The sculpture, below left, was created in 690 while the two paintings were made almost 1,300 years later. Yet all three works are linked by a powerful tradition—the art of the *Maya*, an ancient Mexican civilization.

Compare these three works of art. They are very different, but can you also see the similarities? Notice how each work contains huge, masklike faces. Each distorts images in ways not found in “real life” and all three affect the viewer’s emotions in subtle and mysterious ways. They all seem to have the disturbing quality of dreams—or nightmares.

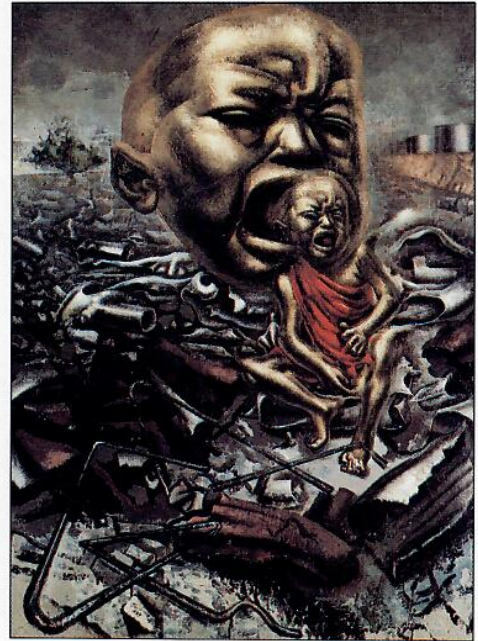
The connections between these images are no accident. The two modern painters—Frida Kahlo (FREE-da-KAH-lo) and David Siqueiros (see-KAY-rohs)—were part of a movement in Mexican art that went back to the Maya Indians for inspiration. The first great civilization in North America was that of the Maya, who migrated from Central America into Mexico in the 10th century. These people constructed huge temples on top of enormous flat-top pyramids, and decorated them with sculptures and *murals*, or large wall paintings. The Maya believed that gods were everywhere in nature, and humans were closely linked to nature as well. This view is reflected in their art—like the temple decoration on the left—where humans, animals, and natural forces are portrayed together. In this ceramic sculpture, an earth monster supports the *focal point* of the whole piece—the large face of the sun god. The god, in turn, wears a headdress made up of two pairs of eyes, a bird, and a fantastic animal on top.

Eventually, the Maya civilization declined. Another Indian people, the Aztec, came into power and flourished until 1519, when Spanish soldiers landed, defeated the Aztec and claimed Mexico as a colony. The Spanish ruled Mexico for 300 years, until 1821, when the Mexican people won independence. But Mexico had not achieved peace. It fought with the United States, to whom it lost half its territory in the Mexican-American War (1846-48). In 1877, General Porfirio Diaz (DEE-as) became dictator, and he and a small group of Mexicans became rich. The vast majority of the people, however, grew poorer and poorer. As a result, the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910 and Diaz was overthrown. Throughout the next several decades, poor Mexicans continued to press for economic reforms. These were never won easily, however; they always came out of political battles.

A whole generation of Mexican artists—including Kahlo, her husband Diego Rivera (Dee-A-go-Riv-ERR-a), and Siqueiros—were profoundly influenced by this history. Siqueiros’s *Echo of a Scream* (above, right) shows an abandoned child surrounded by a Mexican industrial wasteland. The baby’s cry is made to appear even louder by the artist’s use of *superimposed* heads, *telescoped* within each other.

Many Mexican artists became involved in political struggles and created art that protested against social injustice. Others—like Frida Kahlo—wanted primarily to express their own personal, individual feelings. Mexican artists were still influenced by European art, but the majority looked to Maya and other early Indian art for inspiration. As you’ll see in the rest of this issue, today’s Mexican art is made up of all these influences.

Text by Rachel C. Kranz

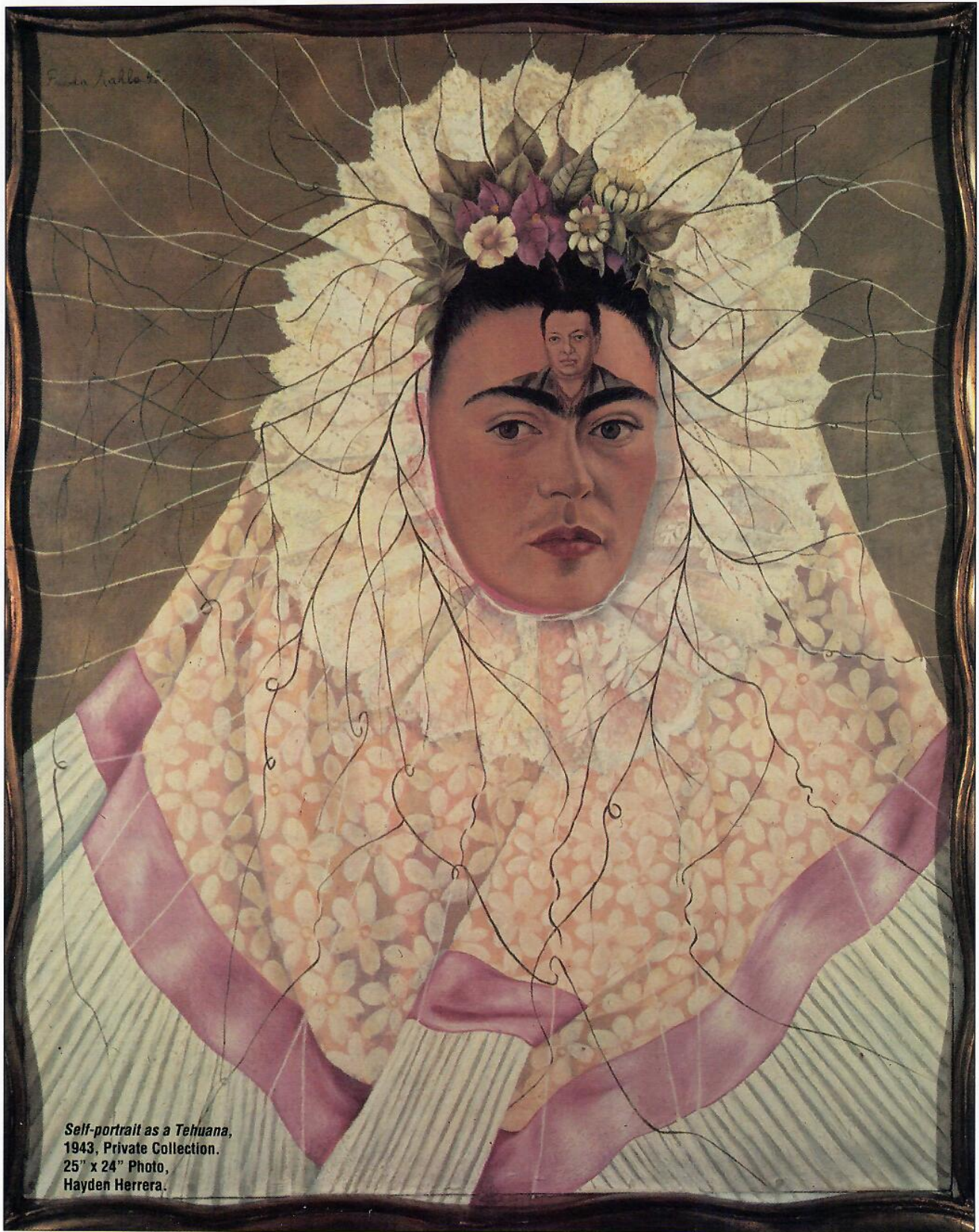


What kind of feeling does this modern Mexican painting give you?

David Alfaró Siqueiros,
Echo of a Scream, 1937. Oil.
The Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY.

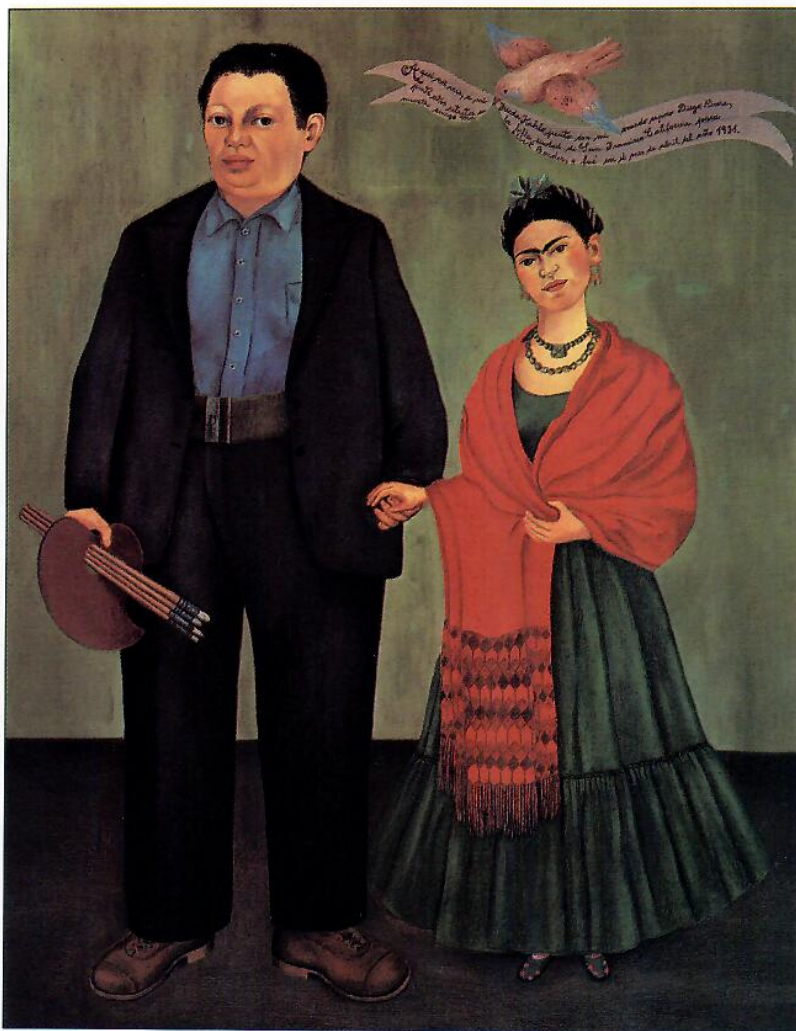
What do the three works of art on these pages have in common?

Images of Pain



Frida Kahlo led an active, exciting, and glamorous life. With her husband, famed muralist Diego Rivera, she was part of a circle of artists, writers, and political activists that helped shape Mexican cultural and political life in the 1930s and 1940s. Along with Rivera, Siqueiros, and others, she helped to create a new Mexican art that drew upon native traditions. Yet behind Kahlo's glamorous facade was an often difficult and troubled person. Born in Mexico City in 1907, she won recognition as a painter at a time when few women artists were taken seriously. Her marriage to Rivera, while rewarding in many ways, was also marked by bitter quarrels. The couple even divorced at one point, although they married again and remained together until Kahlo's death in 1954. Furthermore, Kahlo was seriously hurt in a bus accident when she was 18. As a result, her health was permanently damaged, and she was almost constantly in pain until her death some 30 years later.

In many ways, the accident was a turning point for Kahlo. She took up painting while recuperating, although her injuries were so severe she could not even sit up in bed—she had to learn to paint lying down. The accident also changed Kahlo's outlook on life. About a year after it happened, she wrote in a letter to a friend, "A little while ago, I was a child who went about in a world of bright colors. Now I live in a painful planet." Kahlo began to paint in order to express her feelings about herself. She painted her own features many times, usually presenting her face as a calm and beautiful mask, surrounded by fantastic symbols. Sometimes she painted images



A wedding portrait of Frida and her new husband, painter Diego Rivera.

Frida and Diego Rivera, 1931. Oil. 39 3/8" x 31" San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

of pain—a broken, bleeding heart or a wounded animal. Sometimes her face is surrounded by images from nature—monkeys or birds.

Kahlo's relationship with Diego Rivera, was extremely important to both her art and her life. Kahlo's art often concerned her relation to Rivera. *Frida and Diego Rivera*, above, was painted in 1931, shortly after their marriage. The painting is done in a "folk art" style. The two figures stand stiffly, as though posing for a portrait, looking straight ahead rather than at each other. Twelve years later, Kahlo painted a portrait of herself dressed as a bride (left). Here she shows her obsession with her husband by representing his image "trapped" as a thought inside her forehead. Her brooding expression suggests that she is not completely happy to be thinking of him. She seems to want to attract him with her beautiful, bride-like dress, yet the lines radiating from her face suggest anger, frustration, or perhaps the cracking and crumbling of a lovely surface. These contrasting images convey Frida Kahlo's constant inner conflict.

Twelve years after her marriage Frida wrote, "I suffered two grave accidents in my life. One involved a bus.... The other accident is Diego."

Photo left, Frida painting in bed, 1952.



Preview

Symbolic Self-Portraits

Frida Kahlo is best known for her many self-portraits. What do you think of the two shown here? What do they mean, and how do you think the artist was feeling when she painted them?

Kahlo's unusual and fantastic images are often seen as part of a school of painting known as *Surrealism*. Surrealism was a style of art developed in Europe in the 1920s. It was partly inspired by the new science of psychology which taught that the mind was divided into *conscious* and *subconscious* parts. The conscious mind dealt with practical problems; the subconscious was a deep well of images, symbols, memories. The Surrealists wanted their art to have the freedom and the mysterious power of dreams, so Surrealist art was often produced by letting the mind "go free." Creation could then proceed directly from the subconscious.

As you can see from her paintings in this issue, Kahlo's art also contains many dreamlike symbols. In fact, Kahlo was not really aware of the Surrealists until 1938, but nevertheless her work has many Surrealistic qualities. *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* (pages 8-9) contains a woman surrounded by monkeys—an unusual, Surreal combination. The portrait appears

**"I look
like many
people
and many
things."**

—FRIDA KAHLO

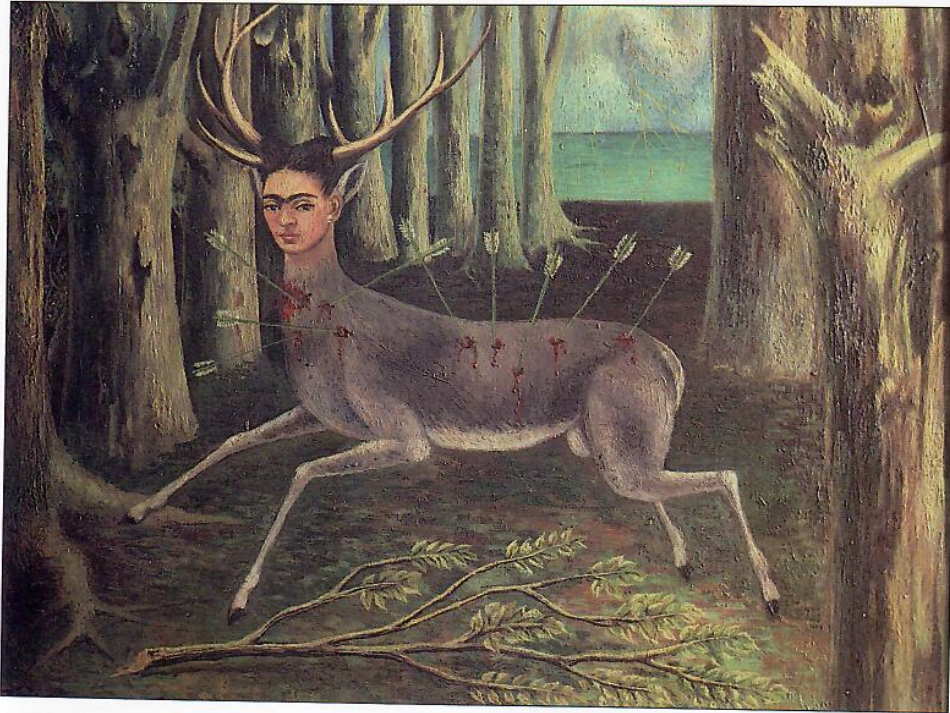
to be lifelike at first, but there are subtle **distortions** and **exaggerations**—the monkeys' arms, for example, are too long and set at unnatural angles. The painting is **superrealistic** in that every detail is in equally **sharp focus**. In this work, Kahlo suggests that she is deeply connected to these animals. The figures are all unnaturally still and solemn, giving the painting a nightmarish quality.

The Little Deer (above,

right) goes even further in connecting Kahlo with nature. By **juxtaposing** her own head and the body of a deer, Kahlo has created a disturbing, dreamlike image. The deer floats and the whole scene appears **frozen in time**. Another Surreal aspect of this work is its **scale changes**. The deer's antlers and body are too big for Kahlo's small head. Many critics see this work as a reflection of Kahlo's deep physical and emotional pain. She was in poor health, and her relationship with Rivera was going badly. The red drops of blood are vivid images of pain, yet the green leafy branch below suggests a reflowering of life and hope.

The Two Fridas, right, also explores Kahlo's emotional pain about her relationship with Rivera. She was just finishing this painting as their divorce became final (although the two remarried a few years later). The women in the painting literally wear their hearts open—**superimposed** on their bodies—for all to see. The woman on the right who wears a Mexican dress holds an image of Rivera—he still loves her. The woman on the left, dressed in the European style, whom Rivera no longer loves, is trying to stop the bleeding of her broken heart. The two Fridas are linked, by the blood vessel that passes between them, as well as by their clasped hands. In a typical Surrealist setting, they seem to be **floating in a vast empty space**.

Despite Kahlo's use of Surrealist techniques, her intentions were vastly different. The Surrealists were interested in escaping from the real world through dreams and irrational images. Kahlo needed her grotesque visions to convey who she was. She later said "I never paint dreams. I paint my own reality."



Every face on this page is that of the artist Frida Kahlo.

The Little Deer, 1946. Oil. 9" x 12" Private Collection. Photo, Hayden Herrera.

"I paint myself because I am so often alone. I am the subject I know best."

—FRIDA KAHLO

This double self-portrait expresses Frida's dual feelings about her husband Diego Rivera.

The Two Fridas, 1939. 67" x 67" Collection of the Mexico City Museum of Modern Art. Photo, Hayden Herrera.



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MASTERPIECE
OF THE
MONTH # 5



Frida Kahlo (1907-1954). *Self-Portrait With Monkeys*, 1943. Oil. 32" x 25" Private Collection. Photo, Hayden Herrera.

SELF-PORTRAIT BY FRIDA KAHLO

Three Modern Mexicans: Three generations of art in twentieth century Mexico

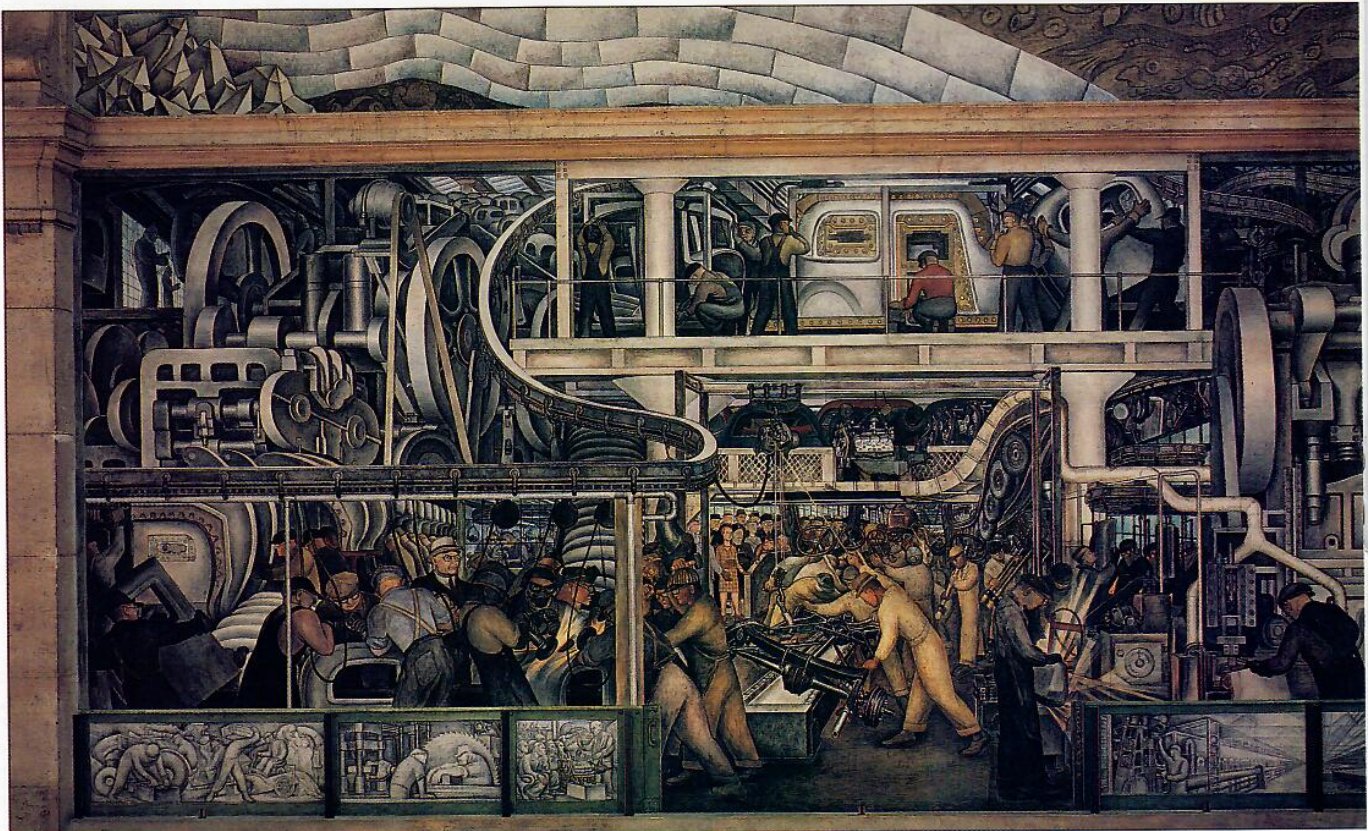
Personal Visions of Today

Many contemporary Mexican artists—like sculptor Nahum Zenil—have been influenced by the work of Frida Kahlo, and their art expresses a very *personal* vision. In the autobiographical work on the right, *Altar*, the artist has sculpted the shape of a religious shrine and put a picture of his mother and himself in the center. What might be the significance of the hearts entwined with thorns placed directly in front of the picture? What do the hearts—which serve as a bright-red focal point

that leads your eye to the drawing behind—say about the artist's mixed feelings for his religion? How does the **texture** of the weathered wood and the **heavy organic shapes** used in this work add to these feelings?

***Altar*, (right) recasts a religious symbol into a powerful contemporary statement.**

Nahum Zenil b. 1947. *Altar*, 1987. Mixed Media. 25" high, Galeria de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City. © I.C.I.





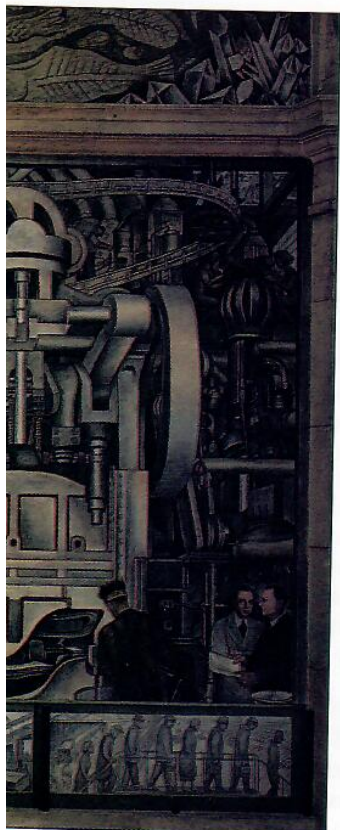
Rufino Tamayo used Mexican images to express his own individual fantasies.

Rufino Tamayo b. 1899.
Lion and Horse, 1942. Oil. 36" 46"
 Washington University Gallery of Art.

Mexican Fantasies

Rufino Tamayo (Ta-MY-oh)—whose best-known work was done in the 1940s and 50s—is another Mexican painter who used both European and traditional Mexican styles. But unlike Rivera, Tamayo was not interested in painting political images of national identity. He wanted to create his own individual vision of the world. If you look at his painting *Lion and Horse* (above, left), you will see the influence of *Cubism*, a European style that broke figures up into flat, geometric planes. The lion's nose has been simplified to two triangles and the horse's legs are made up of rectangles. This work also shows Tamayo's fascination with deeper themes. Many critics see the lion as symbolizing European violence and the horse as representing the Mexican people.

Tamayo's **bright complementary (opposite) colors**—reds, oranges, and greens—are traditionally Mexican. But the artist has used a technique used by the Surrealists—that of **reversing natural laws**. The horse's shadow is a light orange, rather than the darker color it would be in reality. The sun above is an unnatural greenish-yellow.



Images of Yesterday

At the beginning of the 20th century, several great muralists helped to establish a new feeling of pride in native Mexican culture. One of these artists was Frida Kahlo's husband, Diego Rivera. "Diego does what he considers just in life: working and creating," Frida wrote.

The pursuit of justice was in many ways the cornerstone of Rivera's art. Born in a small Mexican town in 1887, Rivera studied art in Europe but returned to Mexico after the Mexican Revolution, determined to make his art a part of the movement for social justice then taking place. Rivera turned to mu-

Diego Rivera's huge murals (left) made political statements.

Diego Rivera (1886-1957).
Detroit Industry, south wall, 1932-1933.
 The Detroit Institute of Arts.

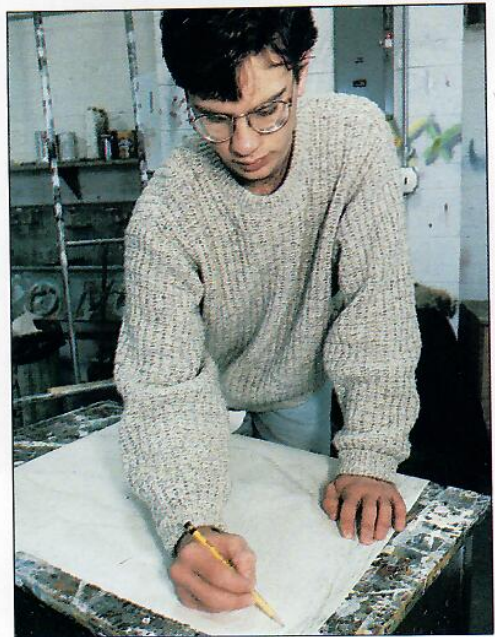
ral because he believed that this form of art was immediately understandable to everyone.

Rivera's style reflects his concerns. When you look at the mural *Detroit Industry* (left), painted on a trip to the United States, you can see Rivera's respect for the working people on whom industry depends. His use of **simplified, organic shapes** portrays people as part of a group activity, rather than focusing on their individual differences. Like many others in the 1930s, Rivera was fascinated with technology, which he thought would make life better for everyone. He involves the viewer by setting up a **visual rhythm**. The repetition of similar shapes and many points of focus constantly move the viewer's eye through the composition, almost like the assembly lines in the picture.

Joseph Ramsack: SURREAL VISIONS

Look at the painting on the opposite page. What is going on? Is one of the animals a dog? If so, why doesn't it look like one? If there's a moon in the sky, why does it seem to have rings around it? And if this scene is taking place at night, why are the colors so bright?

The answer to all of these questions is that the picture is Surrealistic—an art style (see pages 6-7) based on symbols, memories, and dreams. Seventeen-year-old Joseph Ramsack painted this Scholastic Art Award-winning work while he was a senior at Waukesha South High School in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Presently, he's a



freshman at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, where his major is advertising. Joseph is active in all sports, especially tennis and basketball.

When did you begin to draw?

I started very early. Then, when I was about 4, I used to draw cartoons from Fred Flintstone and Snoopy comics. Last year, I took my first art course, and right away I started winning awards.

How did you happen to do this particular painting?

It was part of a school project for a unit on oil painting. We were to choose a famous artist and use his or her technique. I picked Van Gogh—I loved all those dashes—and I liked Picasso's figures too.

How did you start?

I did 20 pencil sketches. I knew I was going to use a cat and dog, but I had them in a lot of different positions. My art teacher thought one of the sketches would work out really well. Then I had to choose whether to use Van Gogh's style or Picasso's. I decided to combine the two—to try to make the figures like Picasso's but to use Van Gogh's techniques and brush strokes. And I wanted the figures to be somewhat Surreal.

How did you discover Surrealism?

We saw some art-history slides—the Surrealist period was the only one I really liked. The colors were

so bright and I was fascinated by the techniques.

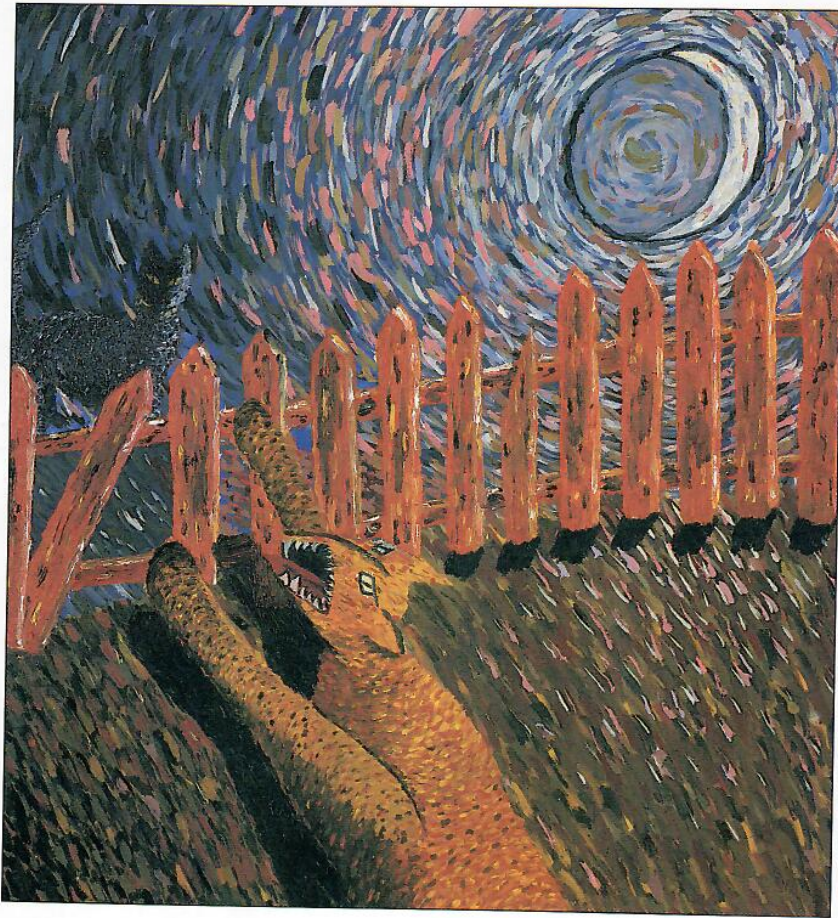
How did you proceed?

I did a bunch of color studies, seeing what paints worked for which objects. Since I knew I was going to use the dashes, I made up a palette of 30 different colors, then put colors together to see which combinations worked. For instance, I did a bunch of experiments for the sky and a number for the fence.

What did you do after the color studies?

I outlined the thumbnail sketch on a masonite board and blocked in all the colors. I made

Photos by Ken Reibel



When you do a Surrealistic painting, you have to make sure that everything works together. One nice thing about Surrealism is that it lends itself to many interpretations.

the dog orange, the ground a flat green, the cat black, and so forth. After that, I started in on the sky.

How did you capture the effect of light?

First, I painted the sky all black. Then I made the moon gray. I began putting white dashes around the moon, making them farther and farther apart. Then I went back and put in light-blue dashes, then pink, then beige.

What came next?

The ground—where I made lighter greens on the right to make it look like the moon is shining. The fence was the hardest part. It was the most-important element in the picture and I needed to make sure everybody saw it. It's a dividing line that cuts off the cat from the dog and separates a night sky from a daytime

foreground. I moved one slab in the fence to break it up and add a diagonal. The difficult part was making it look like a fence, but making it look unreal too. It started working after I put some whites in. Later, I added the suggestion of a shadow.

Did you want the dog to look ferocious?

Yes, because he's trying to get the cat. I meant him to be a kind of monster. Some people think he's a tiger.

How long did your painting take?

About three weeks. I worked on it every day in art class, then I would take it home and work at night. I spent two weekends on it, and the last night I worked about eight hours straight.

Were you pleased with it?

I liked it, but I didn't think any-

one else would, because it was too unrealistic. But when I took it into class, everyone loved it. My teacher kept telling me it was great.

Is it hard to do a Surrealistic painting?

In a realistic painting, you have to make everything look real. If you don't, someone's going to notice. When you do a Surrealistic painting, you have to make sure that everything works together. One nice thing about Surrealism is that it lends itself to many interpretations.

How do you go about making Surrealistic paintings?

You have to study one of the masters very closely. Then you have to do a lot of sketches and color studies. And experiment by trying out different ideas. Surrealism is interesting because it gives you a lot of room for experimentation.

We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules book.



Compare this dual self-portrait with the one by Frida Kahlo on page 7.

RE-CREATING YOUR FANTASIES

Express your dreams—or nightmares—by creating a fantasy self-portrait.

This issue is filled with many fantastic and inventive self-portraits by Frida Kahlo and other Mexican artists. In these portraits, Kahlo and the others use *Surrealistic* imagery to express their own personal feelings and their relationship to the world. They have painted themselves surrounded by fantasy images, as various animals, as part of nature, and wearing all kinds of costumes. Their faces appear within other faces, on other bodies, or as two contrasting sides of the same personality.

As you learned earlier in the issue, the Surrealists produced fantasy paintings by trying to access the part of the mind they called the *subconscious*. The Surrealists wanted to re-create images we are all familiar with from dreams, memories, and nightmares. In this workshop, you'll try to use your subconscious to create your own Surrealist self-portrait.

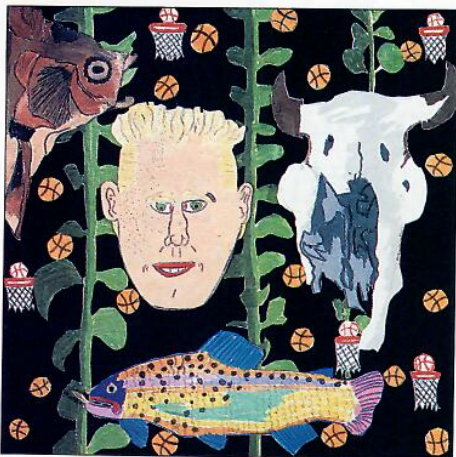


Materials

- Colored pencils
- 12" x 18" Sketch pad
- School pencil
- X-Acto knife
- White glue
- 14" x 14" 80 lb white sulfite paper

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr.,
Morrison (IL) High School.
Assisted by Christopher Johnson.
Photos by Larry Gregory.

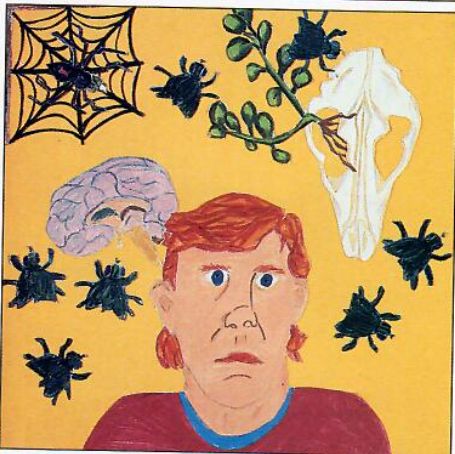
Before you begin this project, take some time to freely sketch images that capture your fantasies, visions, dreams—and even nightmares.



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Starting Out

Step 1. The week before you actually start to work on this project, begin jotting down random thoughts you have about yourself, your personality, your home environment, family, friends, objects, fantasies, a vision or dream, and any images associated with these subjects. Make simple, colored pencil sketches illustrating these images.

Step 2

Draw a self-portrait that fits into a 14" x 14" format. Self-portrait can be full figure, partial, or head/neck area. It can fill the whole paper or not, but it must be the *focal point* of the composition. Lines and colors should be bright and solid. Select color for emotional appeal; you may incorporate words. The drawing should reflect your personal vision. Realism is not important, but the viewer should be able to "read" the drawing.

Step 3

Combine sketches with portrait and develop a collage. You can overlap and interweave images. Create *foreground, middleground, and background* areas. Do not glue down until images are arranged in a satisfactorily balanced composition.



6



Try many combinations before gluing your collage materials down.

(1) Amanda Grove (2) Chad Goff (3) Julie Velazquez
(4) John Hammond (5) Andrea Johnson (6) Jamie Lee Nice

Some Solutions

What scale will your self-portrait be in relation to the fantasy images? Will it be bigger, or smaller, will it fill the whole page or be placed in one corner? Will the fantasy objects be located *within* the portrait or in the *background*? Will your objects flow together naturally, or will they appear to float in deep space? You can *superimpose* objects, *overlap* them, or make them appear *transparent*. How will you use *distortion* and *exaggeration* to increase the fantasy effect? You can use natural colors, but *unnatural color combinations*—purple faces, red leaves, orange sky—will make objects look more fantastic. Which of the fantasy self-portraits on these two pages are based on dreams, which on nightmares? Can you tell what each of these artists is saying about his/her fantasy?

ARTS ALIVE

These two current shows focus on Mexican art from ancient times to the present.

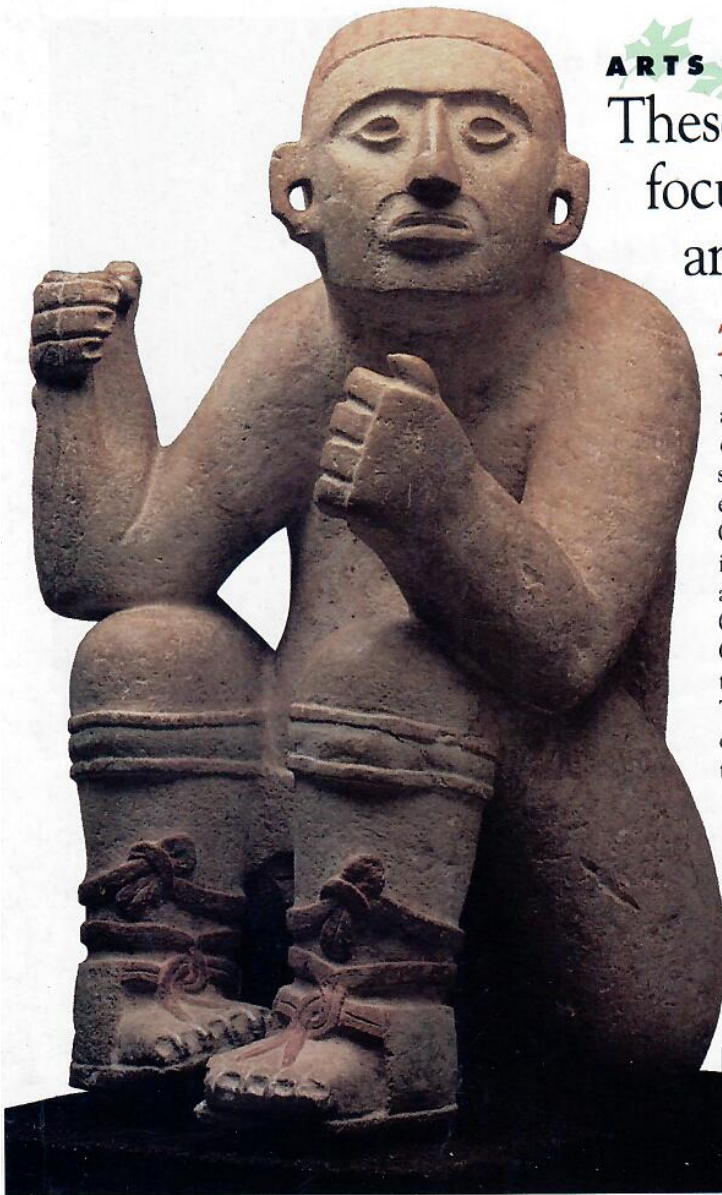
Thirty Centuries of Art

You've already read about the ancient Mexican civilization called the *Maya*. The Maya sculpture on the left was created before 1492—the year Christopher Columbus arrived in America. Central American art from this time is called *pre-Columbian*. This particular pre-Columbian figure was designed to hold a ceremonial flag. These sculptures were usually carved in straight, upright postures, but this Maya version de-

picts another kind of figure. The pose is twisted—and the body is exaggerated. One arm and one leg are shorter than the other, while one foot is bent inward. Perhaps this was a portrait created to honor a specific individual. The sculpture's **blocky, massive, simplified shapes balance** the intricate details of the shoes. The **natural texture** of the limestone contrasts with the **stylized face**. This sculpture and some 400 other works spanning 3,000 years can be seen in the show *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*: San Antonio Museum, April 6-August 4, 1991; Los Angeles County Museum, October 6-December 29, 1991.

Compare this Mayan sculpture with the one on page 2.

Standard Bearer, 9th-13th century. Limestone. 37 3/8" high. Museo Regional de Antropología de Yucatan.



Ancient Myths Revisited

Contemporary Mexican artist Sergio Hernandez creates works that represent ancient Mexican myths. Hernandez has constructed this **stylized** self-portrait (right) from handmade ceramic tiles. The **organic (curving) forms** of the tiles are echoed and repeated in the **linear, relief (three-dimensional) areas**. The face is **masklike** rather than being a realistic portrait. The artist does not reveal his actual physical identity, but gives clues as to how he sees himself. By using material from the earth—clay—to create his self-portrait, Hernandez

states that he is part of the land that inspired his art. This sculpture and over 50 more works by contemporary Mexican artists can be seen in a show called *Through the Path of Echoes*: Western Art Gallery, Bellingham, WA, April 8-June 1, 1991; Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, TX, June 28-August 11, 1991; The Art Museum at Florida International University, Miami, FL, October 25-November 27, 1991; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, MI, November 20, 1992-January 10, 1993.



Was this face sculpted centuries ago or created just the other day?

Sergio Hernandez b. 1957. *Untitled Self-portrait*, 1989. Ceramic. 30" x 28" x 6" Galeria Quetzalli, Oaxaca. © I.C.I.