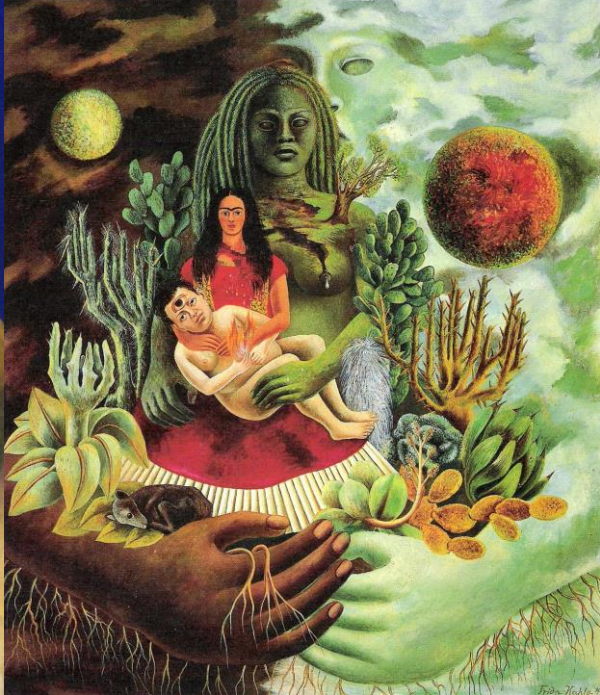
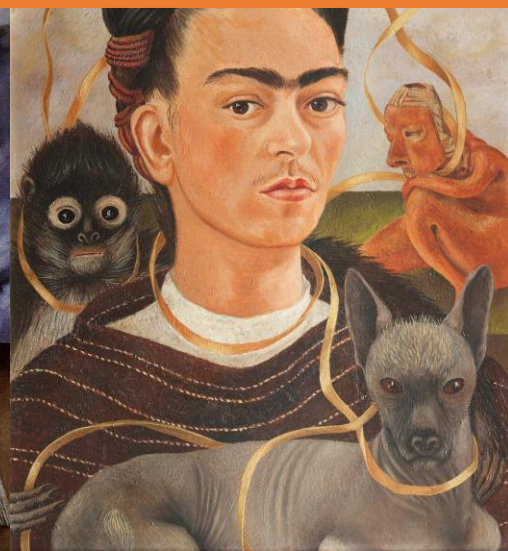


Frida Kahlo





Overview

- Mexican artist (1907-1954) died aged 47
- Diagnosed with Polio at 6 years old resulting in the disfigurement of her right leg
- Attended a prestigious school to train as a Doctor where only 35 girls were enrolled
- At 18 years old Kahlo was involved in a near fatal bus crash that resulted in lifelong injuries and pain
- As a result of the accident, she was unable to have children and so lavished her love and attention on the many pets she owned
- Kahlo married a famous Mexican mural artist. They had a tumultuous relationship that she expresses in her work
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0yv0GDyKEA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuhCy01YU3E>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9Vz9xdMNuA>



Portraiture

Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird

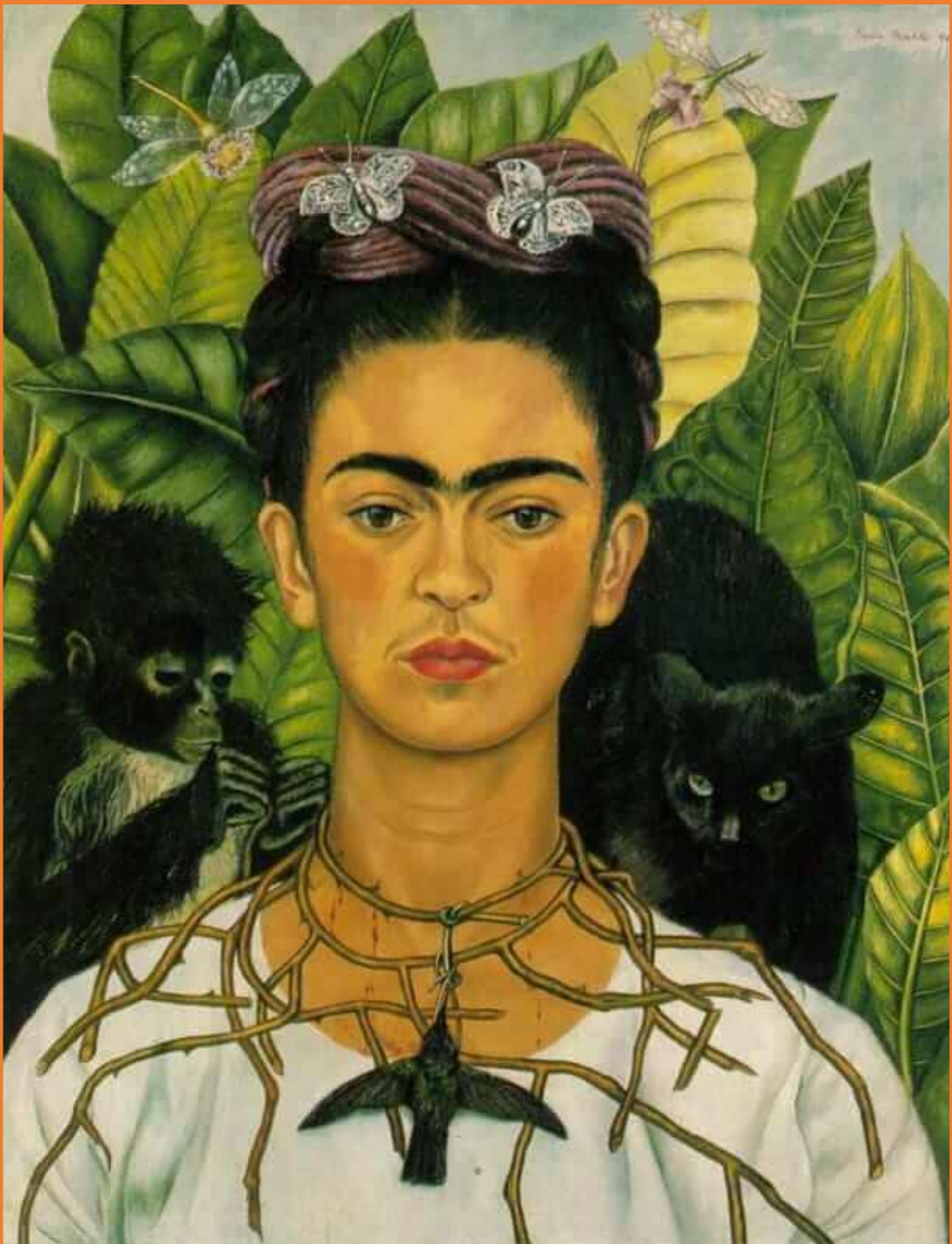
1940

Oil Paint on Canvas

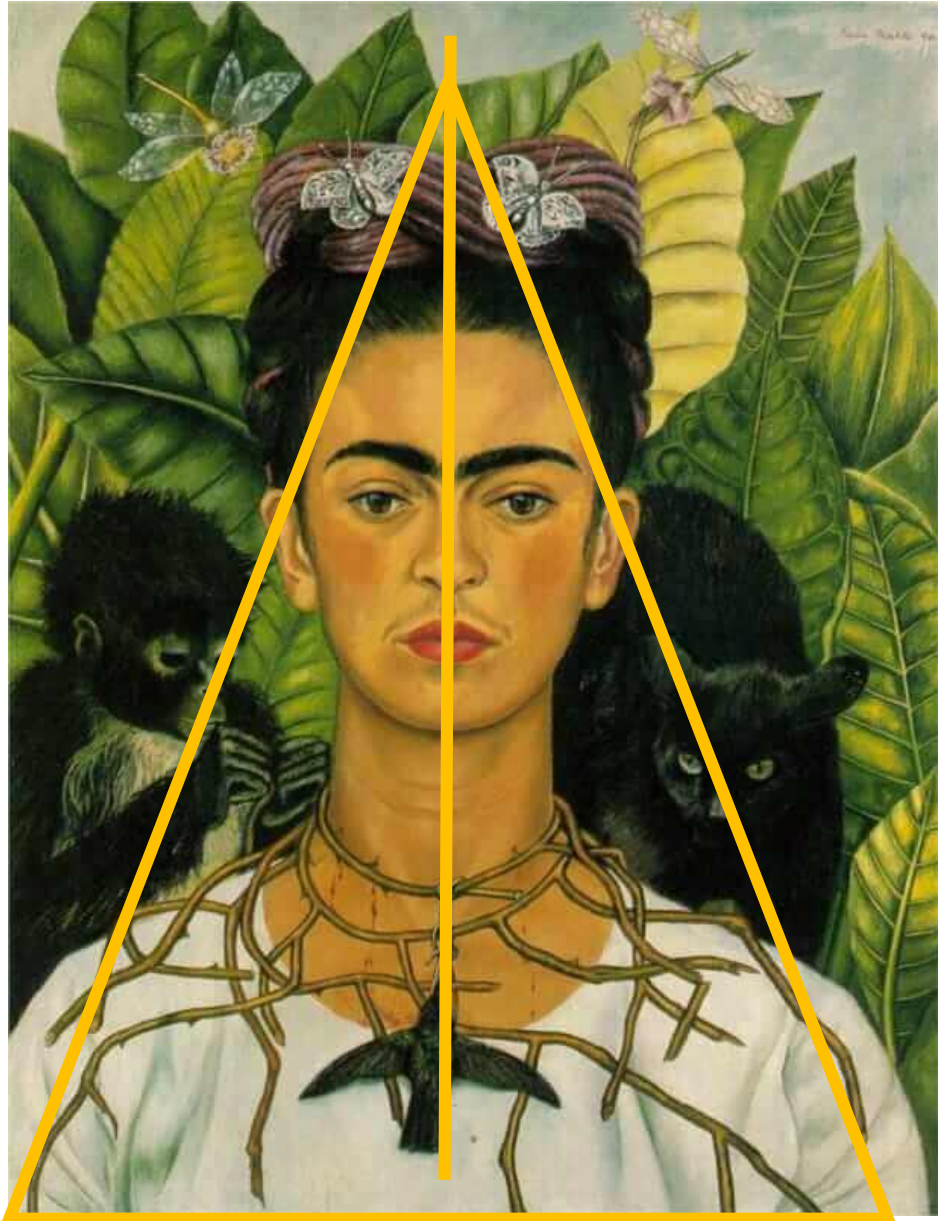
61.25 cm x 47 cm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzNwZCl8d2M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcdDLUdX3Kc>

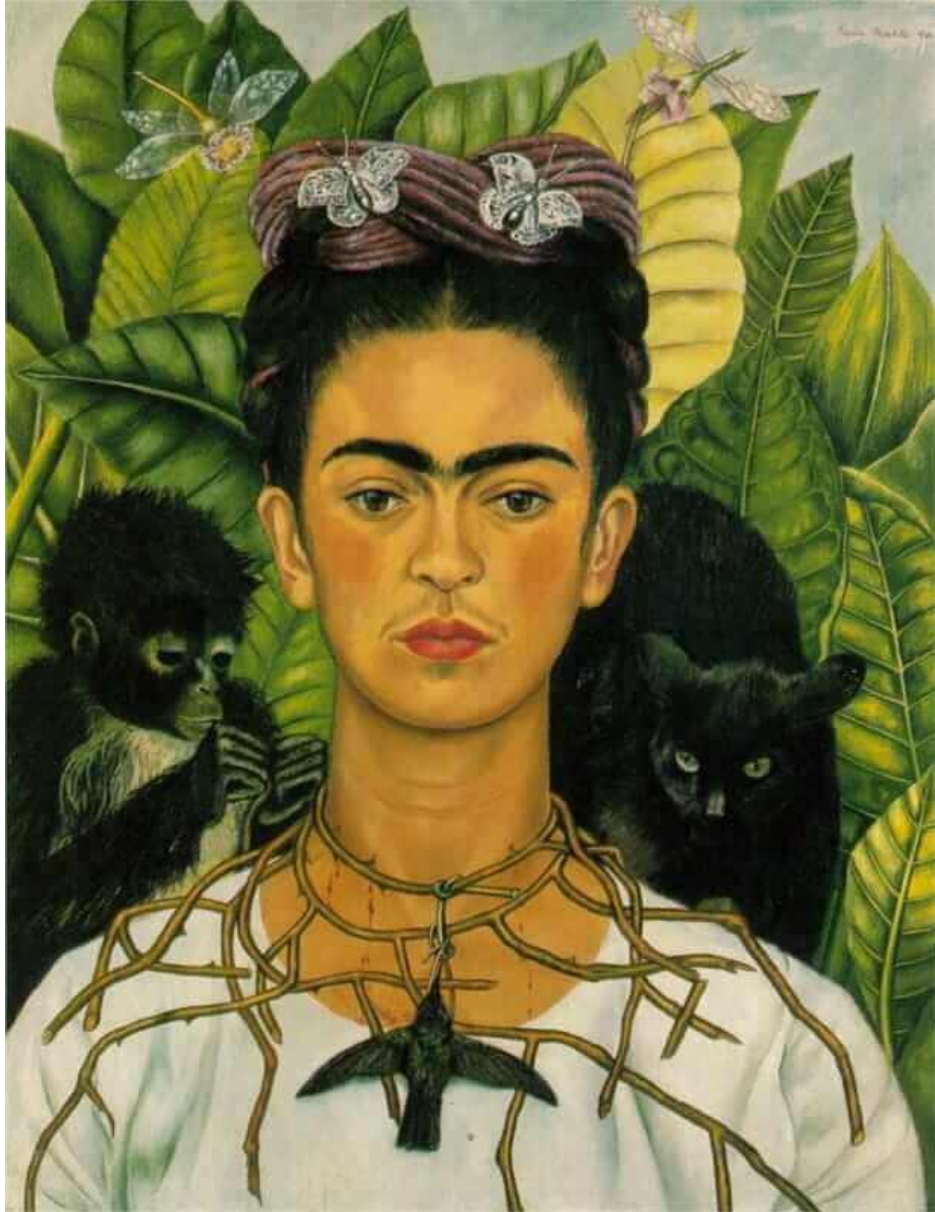


Composition



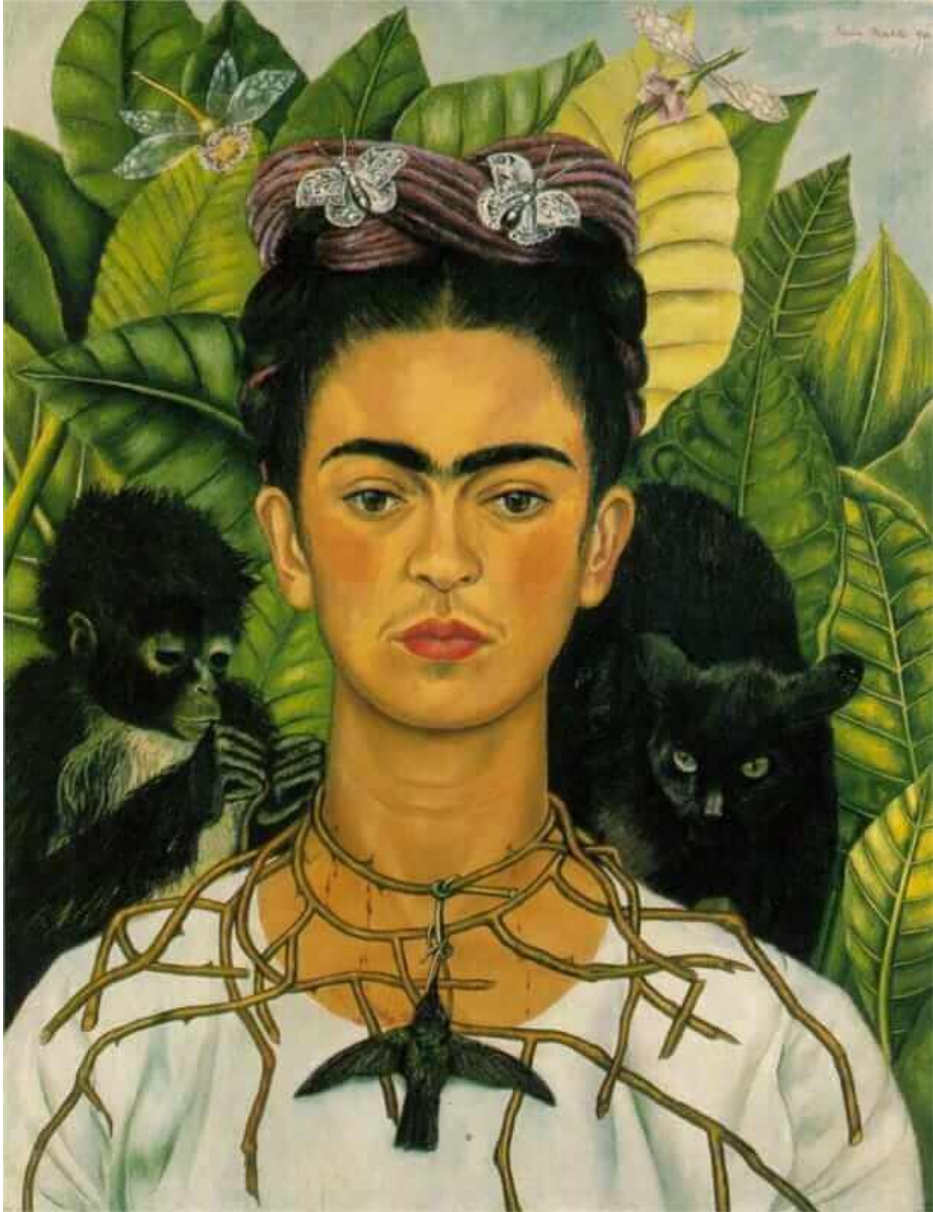
- The **focal point** is.....
- The composition is **symmetrical** as she is placed in the centre of the painting with similar imagery placed on each side. The monkey and cat on either shoulder provide symmetry as do the **mirrored** butterflies in her hair and the dragonflies above her head. This provides an aesthetically pleasing image with strong visual impact.
- Kahlo also utilises a **triangular composition** within the painting that helps **draw your eye around the image**. Her centred body creates a triangle that leads your eye from the monkey, to the hummingbird and cat and then up to the top of her head to look at the insects.
- This is a very **busy composition**. The foreground has a lot of different elements and subject matter whilst the background is filled with dense, luscious leaves. This means there is **very little negative space** that creates an **intense atmosphere**.

Media Handling/Techniques



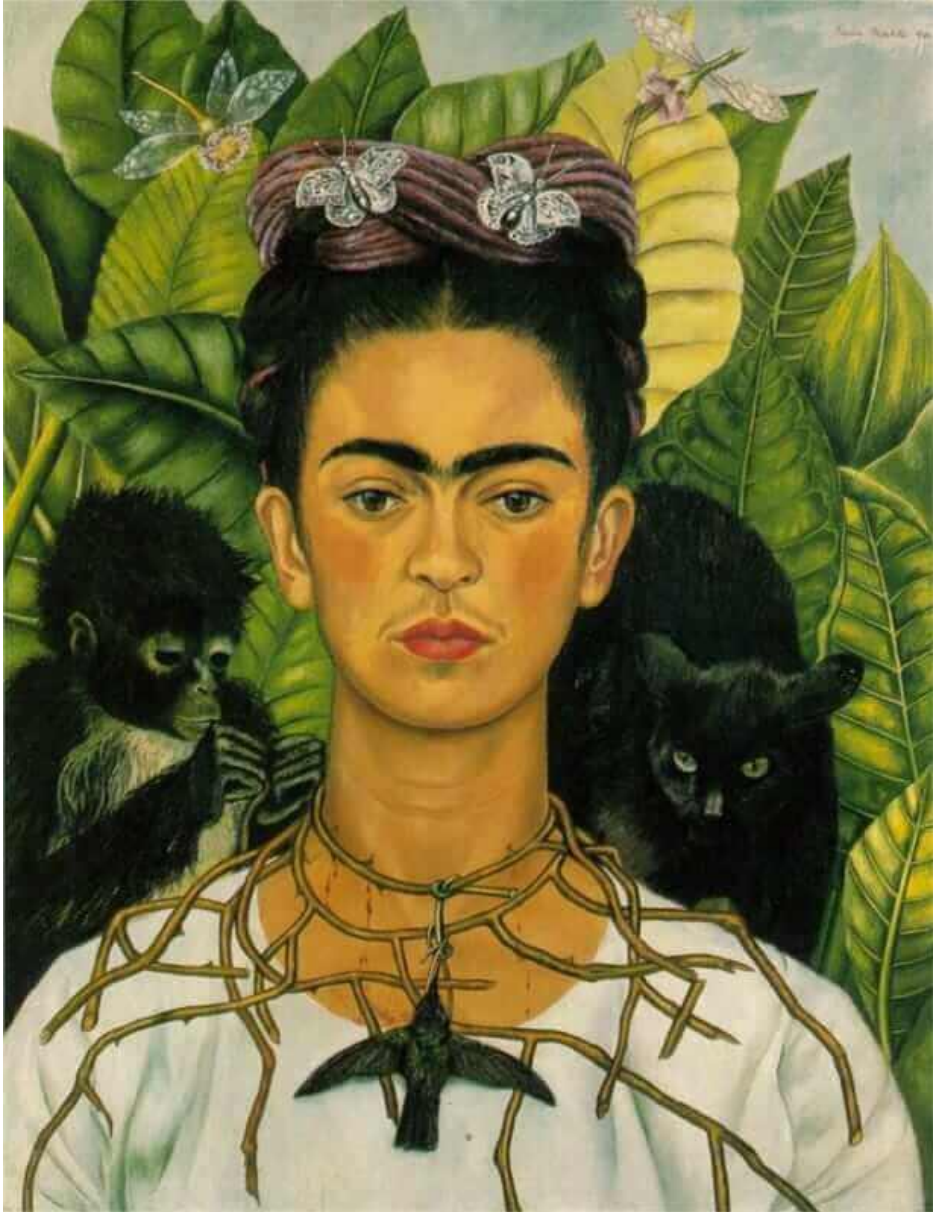
- Kahlo applies small delicate brush strokes to emulate the texture of the fur on the cat and monkey. This creates realistic texture in the foreground. She also applies small delicate strokes of paint to enhance her famous trademark eyebrows!
- Kahlo applies blended paint with no visible brushstrokes to show the soft and smooth texture of her blouse and skin.
- Kahlo also applies blended paint on the leaves that makes them look quite smooth and flat making them look less realistic than the imagery in the foreground.
- It is a naively painted piece inspired by Mexican folklore art.

Colour



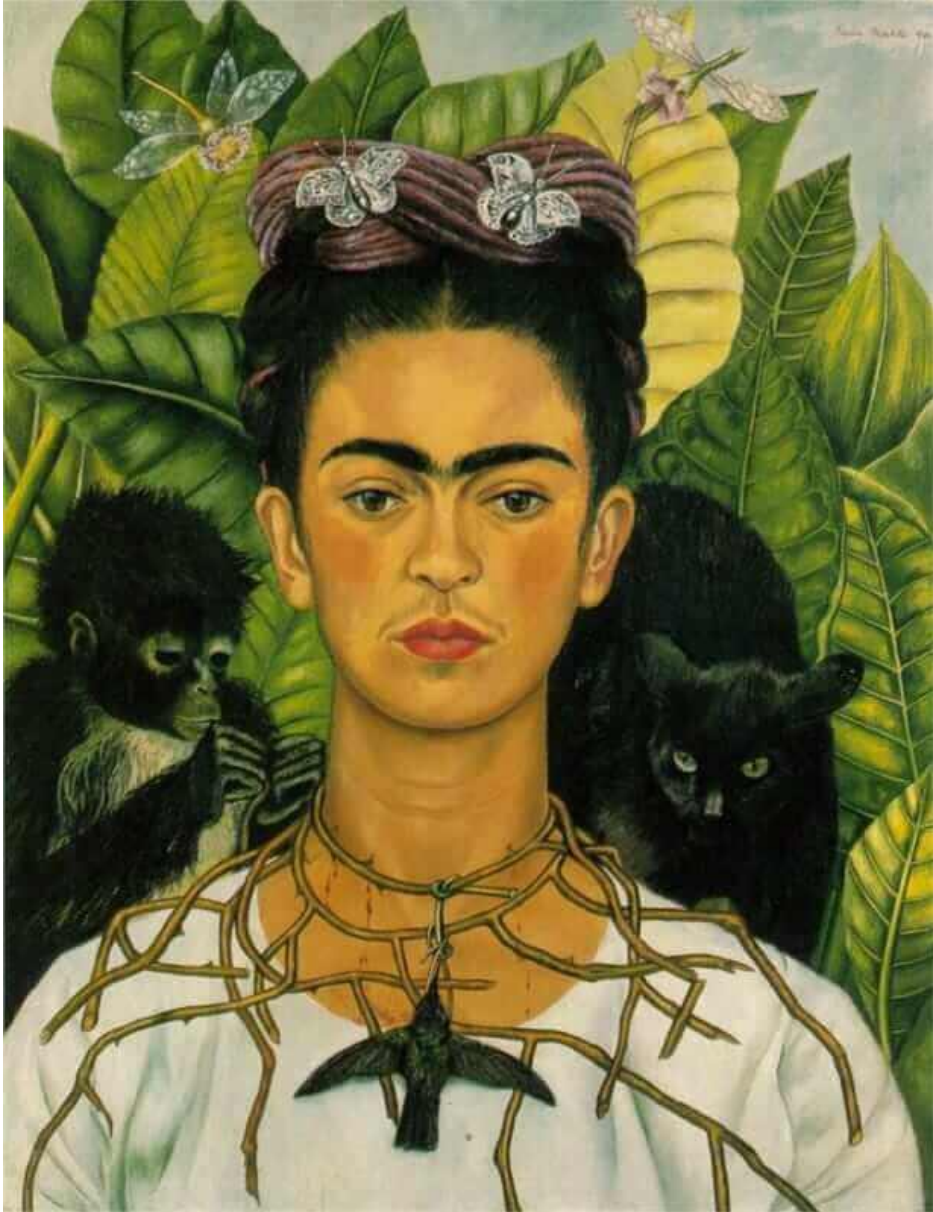
- Kahlo utilises a natural and organic colour palette of greens, browns that add to the realistic qualities of the painting.
- The imagery in the foreground is in a neutral colour palette whilst the leaves in the background are strong shades of green that adds contrast between the subject matter.
- Kahlo also uses a lot of black and white in the painting. Her white t-shirt and black hair, monkey and cat contrast against the green background. Additionally, the dark colours of the hummingbird contrast against her white t-shirt creating a focal point.
- Warm colours are confined to the centre of the painting through skin tone and the pink of her lips that immediately draws our eyes to her face.

Tone



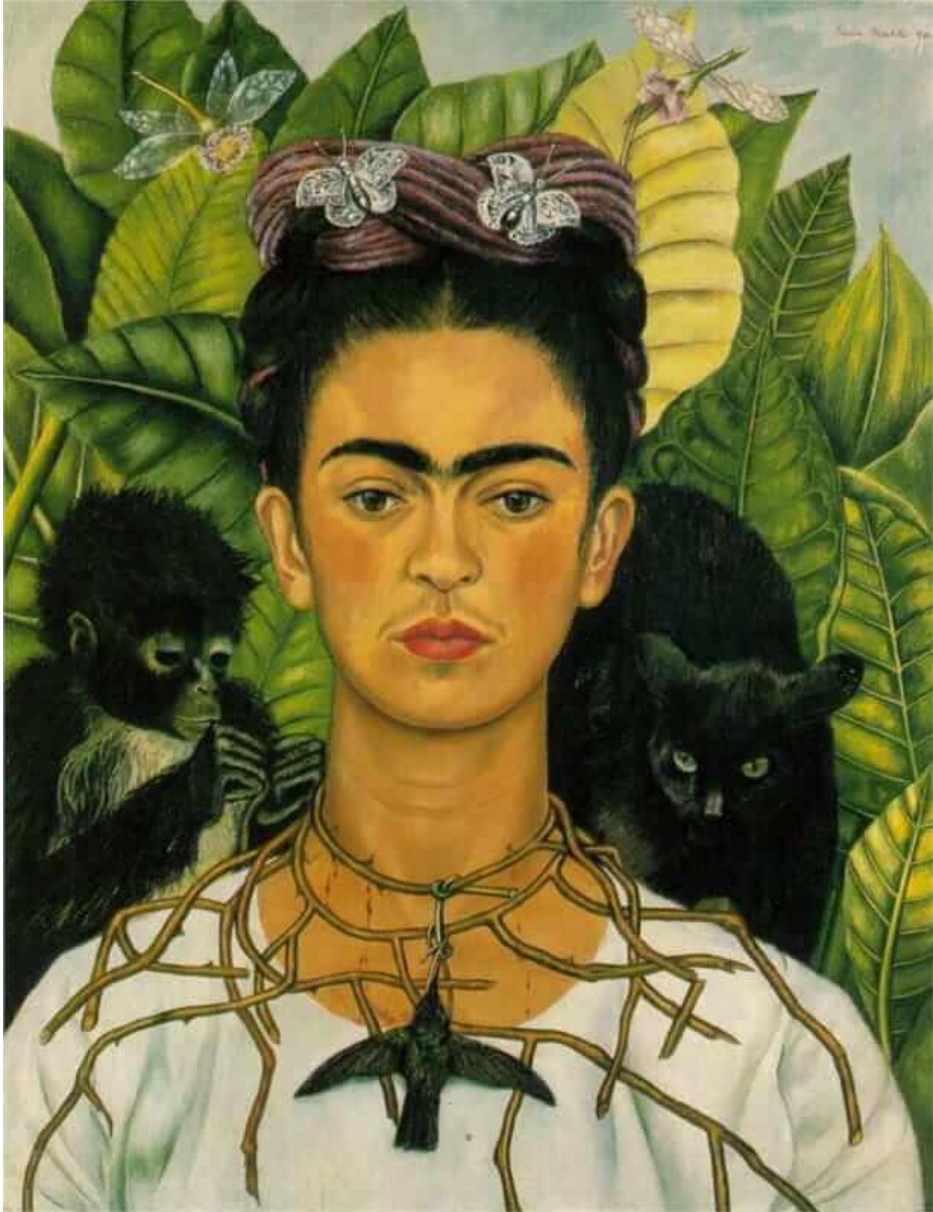
- In the foreground the tone is applied in a refined and well rendered manner providing realistic form to the subject matter. In particular, the refined subtle tone on her t-shirt shows the delicate creases and folds making it look realistic and 3D.
- Kahlo applies less refined, exaggerated tone on the leaves in the background that makes them look less realistic and slightly stylised. This creates contrast between the realistic and delicate subject matter in the foreground and the bolder background.
- The use of bold white in the blouse and the harsh dark shades of her hair and the cat and monkey create a strong triangular composition that frames her face in the centre.

Texture



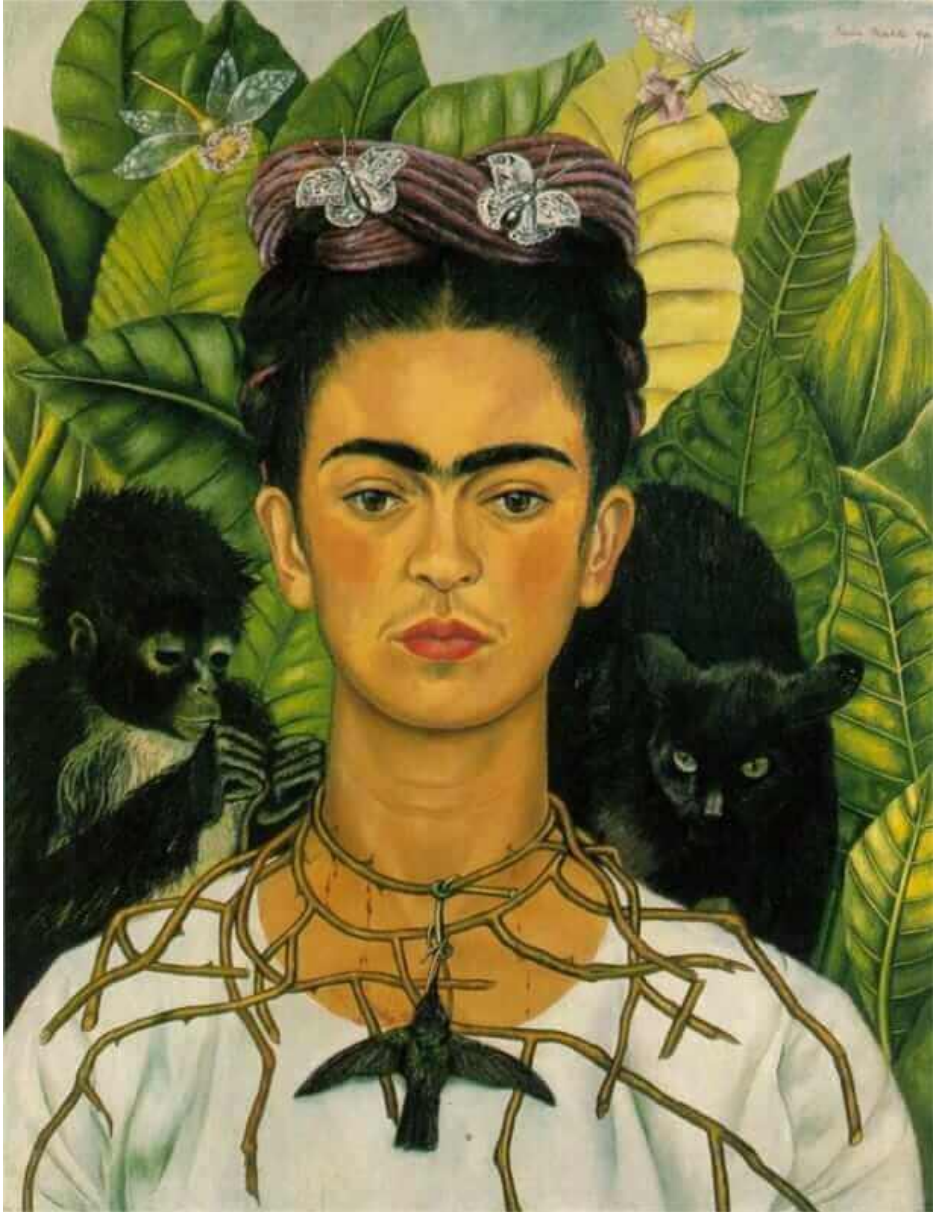
- Kahlo creates realistic texture in the foreground. She applies small delicate brush strokes to emulate the texture of the fur on the cat and monkey.
- Kahlo applies blended paint with no visible brushstrokes to show the soft and smooth texture of her blouse and skin.
- Kahlo also applies blended paint on the leaves that makes them look quite smooth and flat making them look less realistic than the images in the foreground.

Line



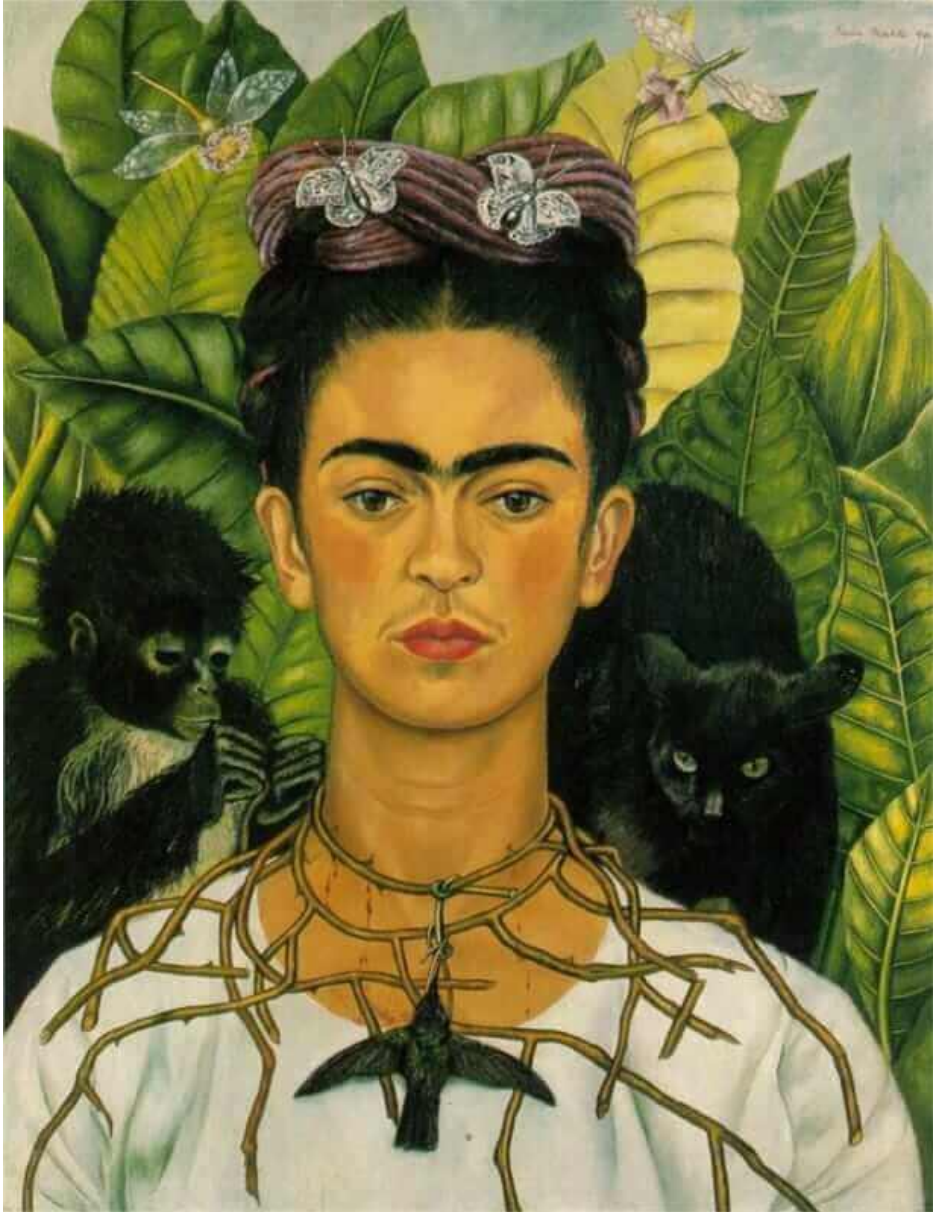
- **Leading lines** are created through the organic subject matter.
- The branches of the thorn necklace **twist and curl up** Kahlo's body and around her neck **leading our eyes up the image** to her face and the cat and monkey.
- The leaves in the background are all placed on a **slight angle**, so the **veins of the leaves create diagonal leading lines** drawing our eyes back down to the centre of the image and the main subject matter.

Shape/Form



- **SHAPE-** The repeated leaf shape in the background creates a busy organic pattern that adds to the intense, clostraphobic feeling in the painting.
- **SHAPE-** The outstretched wings of the dead hummingbird mirror the shape of her iconic eyebrows adding an additional element of symmetry to the painting.
- **FORM-** Kahlo creates realistic form in the foreground as tone is applied in a refined and well rendered manner. This makes the subject matter realistic. In particular, the refined tone on her t-shirt shows the delicate creases and folds making it look 3D.
- **FORM-** Kahlo applies less refined, harsher tone on the leaves in the background that makes them look less realistic and 2D.

Pattern



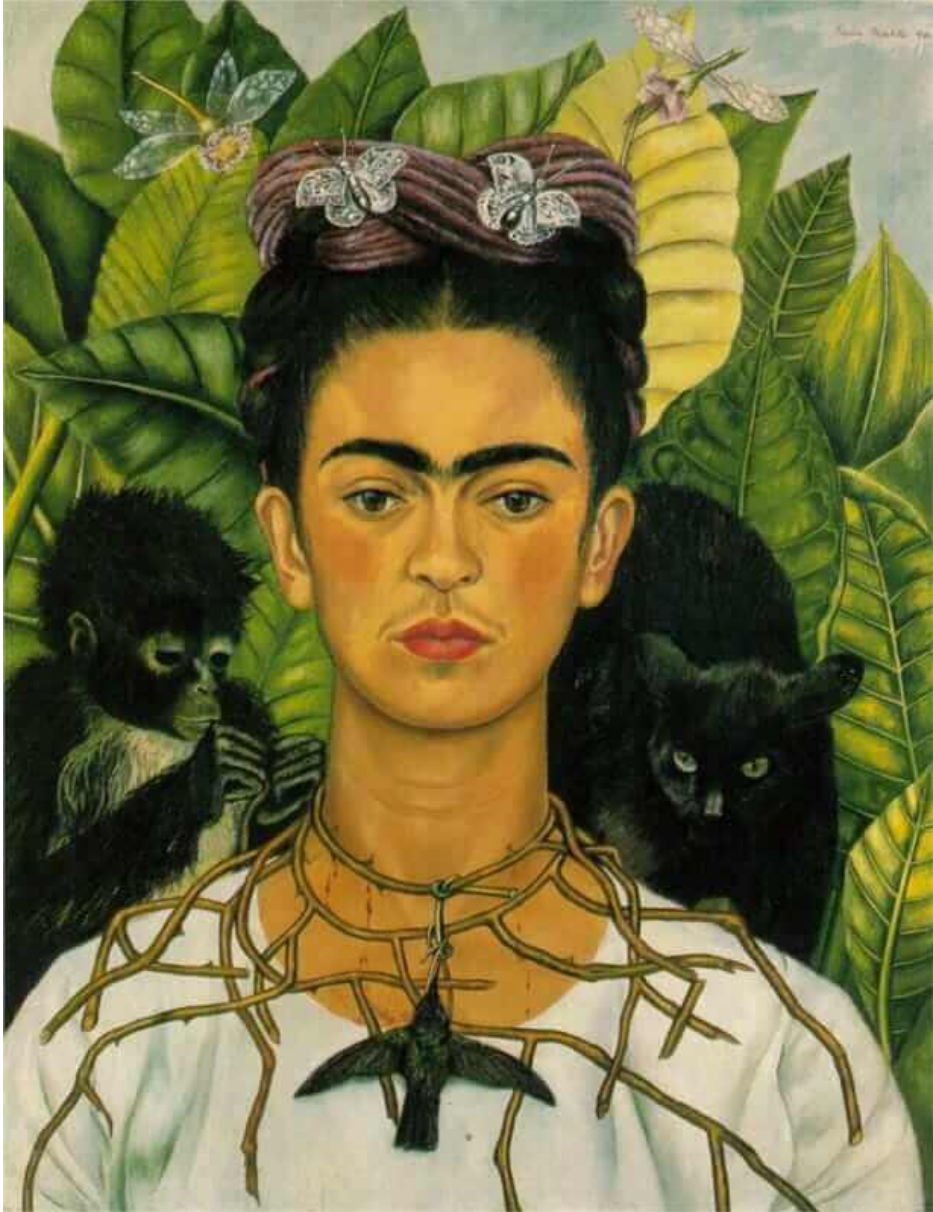
- Kahlo creates a busy organic pattern through the repeated leaf shape that adds to the intense, claustrophobic feeling in the painting.
- Kahlo utilises symmetry throughout the painting to provide balance and unity. The butterflies and dragonflies mirror one another, the black monkey and cat sitting on either shoulders balance the painting and the hummingbird mirrors the shape of her iconic eyebrows.

Scale



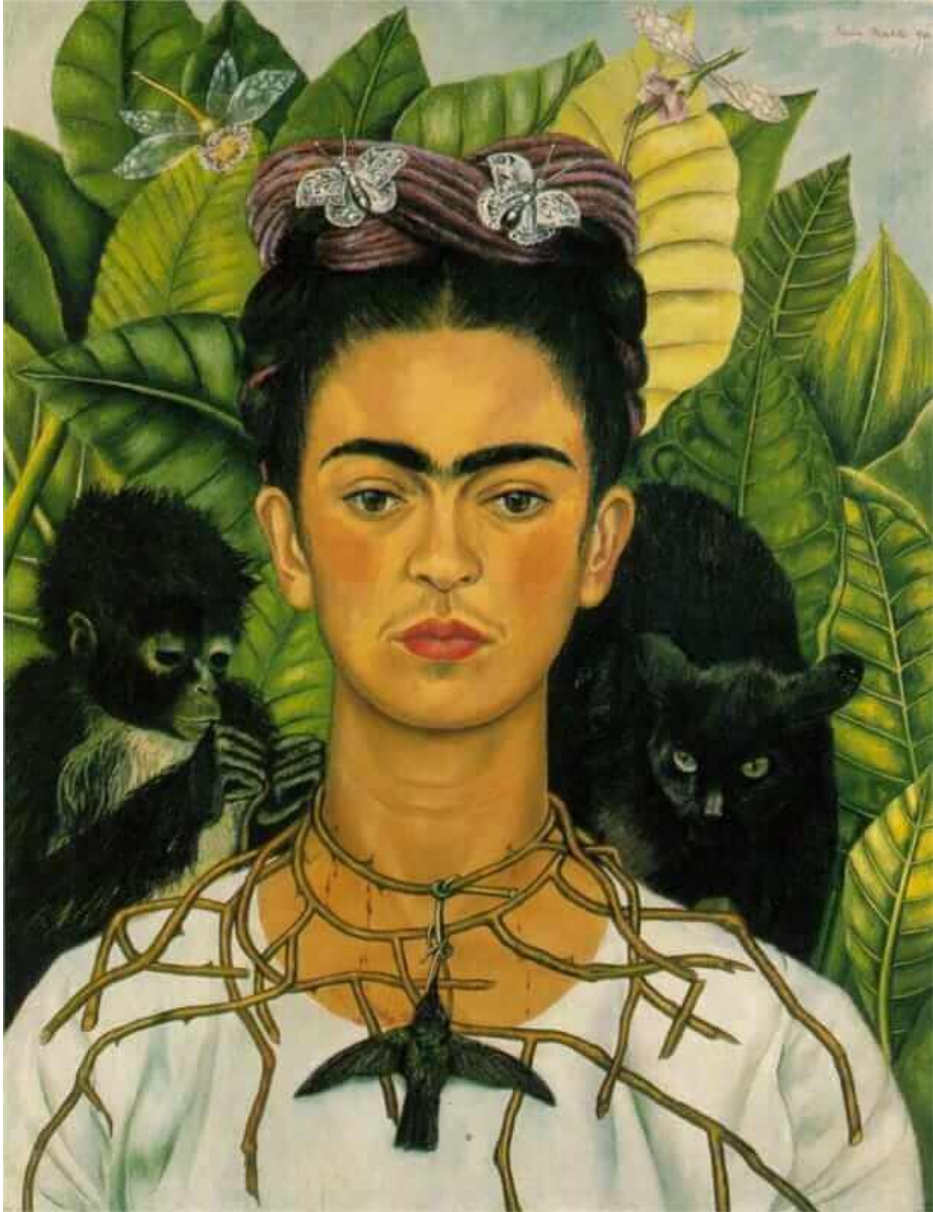
- The subject matter in this painting is accurately proportioned adding to the realism of the piece.
- The scale of this painting is just slightly smaller than lifesize at 61.25 cm x 47 cm. This means the viewer can look at the painting and almost feel like they can interact with Kahlo and the other subject matter.
- The almost lifesize scale of the painting allowed Kahlo to apply a great deal of detail to the painting to add to its realistic qualities. For example, the small intricate brush work of the fur, hair and feathers and the subtle tonal gradients within the creases of her t-shirt help create realistic imagery.
- The luscious leaves in the background appear out of scale, larger than real life, adding to the claustrophobic and intense feeling of the painting.

Style



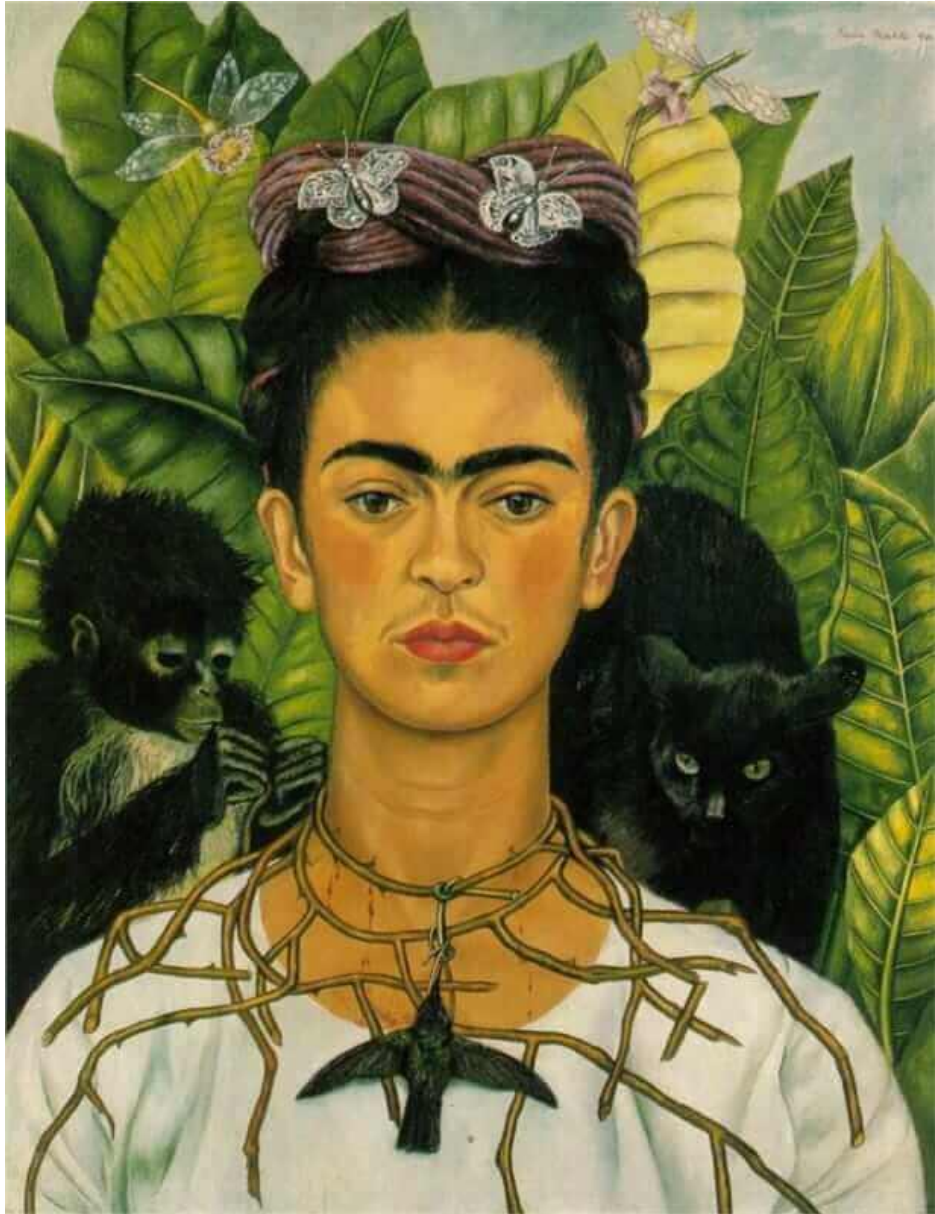
- Kahlo derives her unique **style** from both her **Mexican heritage** and **Surrealism**.
- **Realism-** Her application of a relatively realistic colour palette and reasonably refined application of tone and media handling creates realistic imagery.
- **Surrealism-** However, her unusual combination of subject matter creates a surreal, dream-like image.
- **Mexican Heritage-** Kahlo references her culture in the majority of her works. Her clothing and hairstyles often reflecting her Mexican Heritage. Additionally, she often paints animals that hold symbolic meaning in Mexican culture and depicts flora & fauna that are native to Mexico.

Subject Matter/Imagery

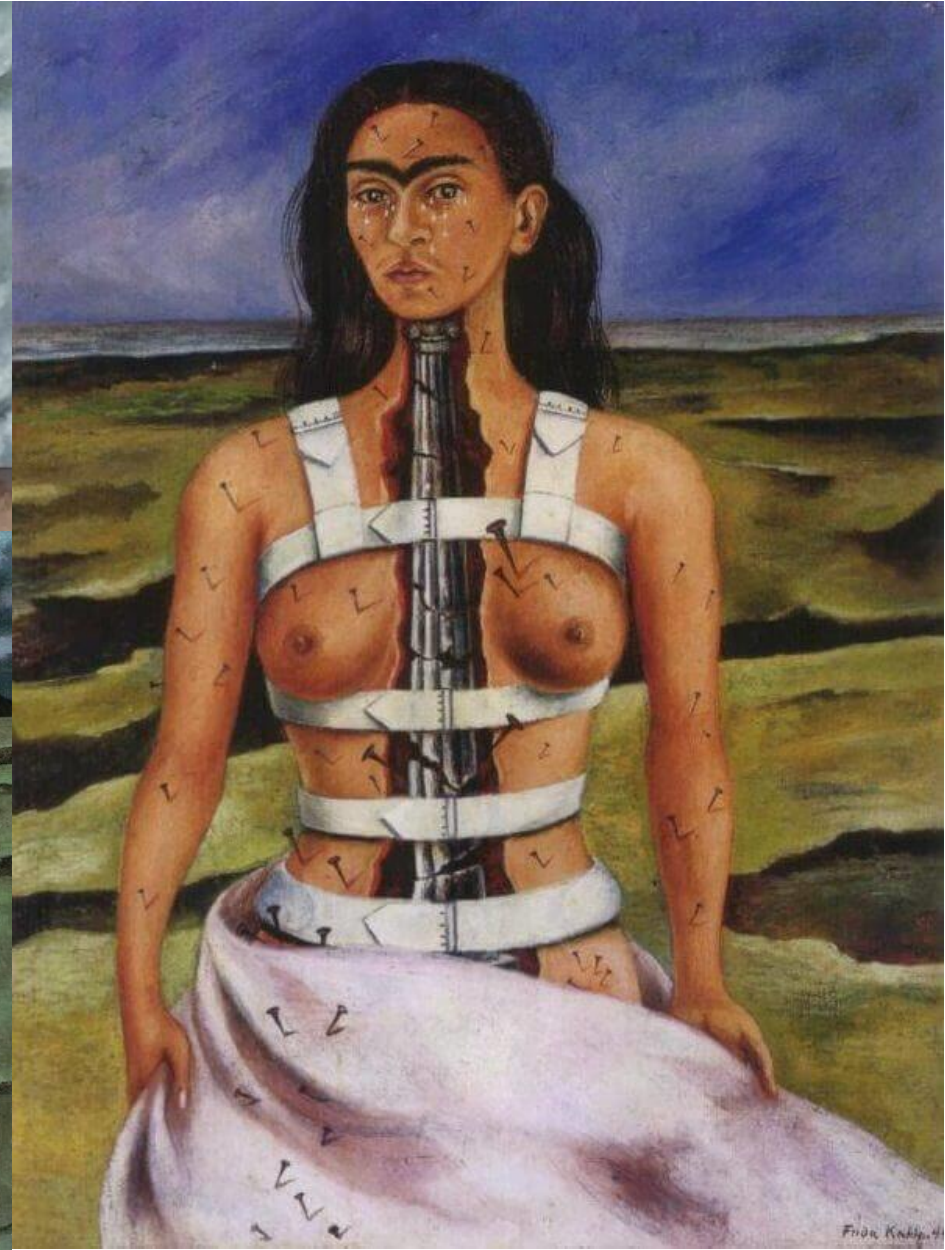


- The subject matter in this painting depicts the pain and struggles Kahlo experienced throughout her life.
- Firstly, the intense, dense jungle in the background creates a tight, claustrophobic atmosphere. The animals sitting on either side of her shoulders intensifies the feeling that she is trapped.
- The strong vibrant green leaves in the background may represent fertility and Kahlo's yearning to have a child which she is unable to have due to her accident.
- The thorn necklace is wrapped tightly around her neck, so much so she is bleeding, whilst the branches appear to be growing down and intertwining with her body. A dead hummingbird is tied to the thorns further supporting the idea that she has lost her freedom.

Mood & Atmosphere



- Kahlo creates an intense and slightly sombre atmosphere in her painting. Her blank facial expression and glazed over unfocused eyes give the impression she is depressed and possibly giving up with the constant pain and rocky love life.
- The lack of negative space and extremely busy composition creates a suffocating atmosphere.
- The thorn necklace with dead hummingbird also suggests she feels under stress and pressure as it appears to be tight around her neck and growing down and around her body also suggesting she feels trapped with the pain of her injuries and the pain of her broken down relationships.

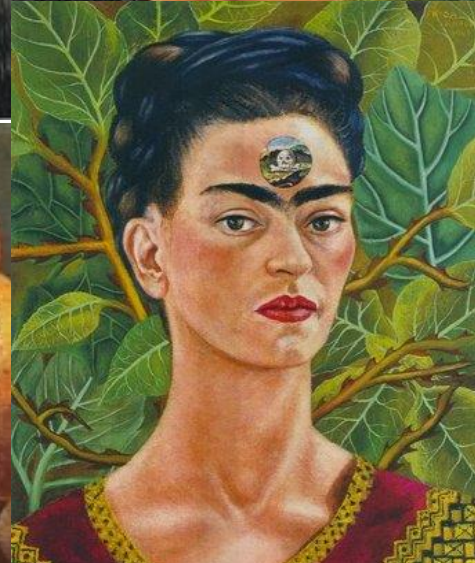
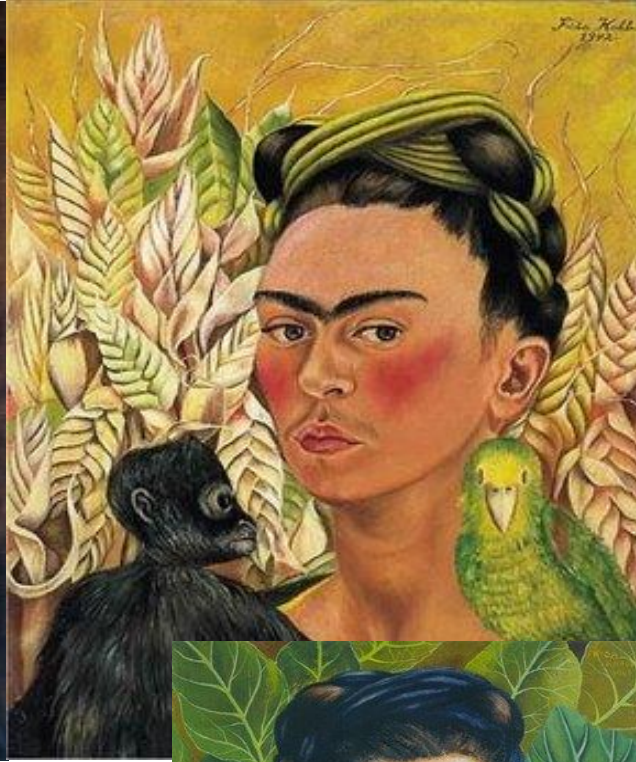
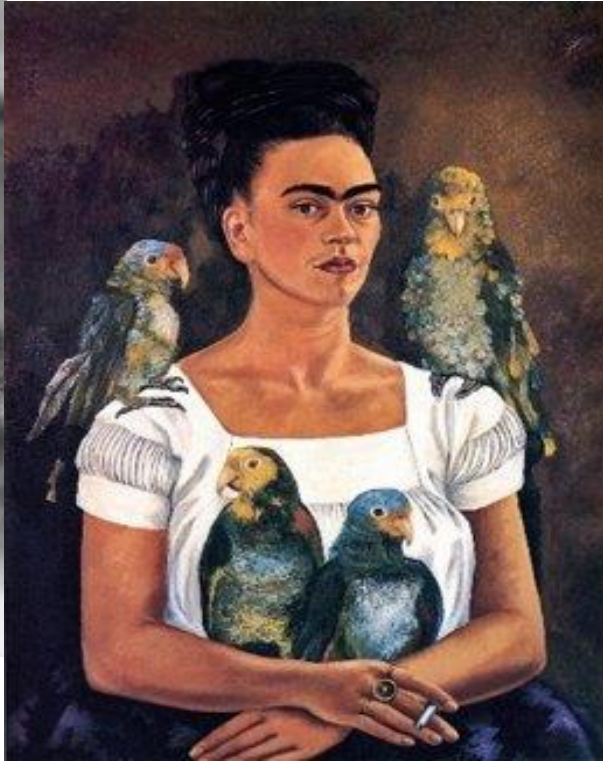


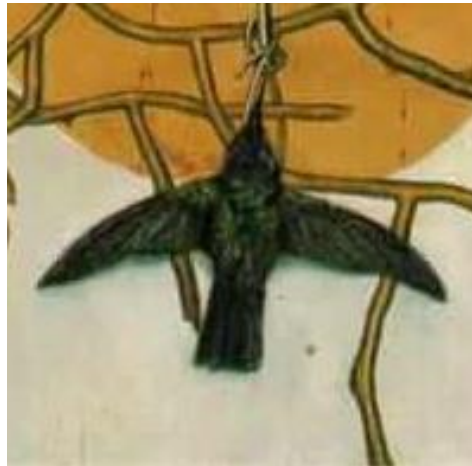
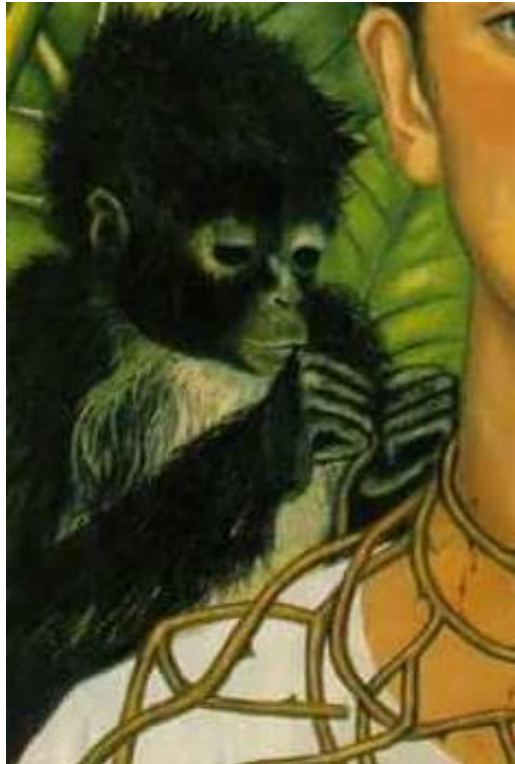


Kahlo had to deal with insufferable physical pain throughout her life. At the age of 6, she contracted Polio that left her right leg thinner and shorter than the left. This meant that she had to endure a limp and pain for the rest of her life.

At the age of 18, she suffered a near fatal bus crash that left her in excruciating pain for the rest of her life. She was impaled through the abdomen by a large metal handrail that damaged her organs and fractured her spinal cord, leaving unable to have a child. This left her bedridden in a plaster corset for 9 months. It was during this time she gave up her dreams of practising medicine and began to paint.

Kahlo often depicts her pain and suffering in her paintings that can be seen in 'Self Portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird' as the thorn necklace is wrapped tightly around her neck suffocating her and drawing blood. Whilst, the strongly pigmented, luscious green leaves in the background may symbolise fertility and her yearning to have a child.





Traditional clothing and hairstyle- Frida's unique and powerful appearance is taken from her Mexican heritage. She started dressing in more traditional after marrying Diego as she thought he wanted a traditional Mexican wife. This is shown in 'Self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird' where she wears her hair in a traditional up style and a traditional Mexican blouse. It was at this time that she started painting imagery heavily influenced by Mexican symbolism.

Mexican Symbolism- Cats- The black cat is a symbolism n bad luck and death in Mexican Culture. The cat is sitting on her shoulder in a menacing pose, maybe suggesting Frida knows the path ahead of her will be challenging and full of further pain.

Mexican Symbolism- Hummingbird- In Mexican culture the hummingbird represents love and joy. Kahlo painted this portrait after her divorce from Diego so maybe she is hoping for better luck in her next relationship however, the bird appears to be dead, hanging from the thorn necklace so maybe she is suggesting she has given up on love, too hurt to carry on.

Mexican Symbolism- Monkey- The monkey was gifted to Kahlo by Diego. The monkey is a symbol of lust in Mexican Mythology. Kahlo paints monkeys in many of her paintings. However, the monkey is tugging at the thorn necklace, inflicting further pain, suggesting the pain she is suffering due to the divorce.