

[PDF] Finding Frida Kahlo (English And Spanish Edition)

Barbara Levine - pdf download free book

Finding Frida Kahlo

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Encuentro a Frida Kahlo

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. Independent curator Levine (*Around the World*) encountered a mysterious, important and long-hidden collection of more than 1,200 of what are reputed to be Frida Kahlo's personal items in the back room of an antiques store in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. (The Associated Press has reported that the Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo Trust has charged that the materials in this book are forged. Mexican prosecutors are investigating.) Levine and Jaycox meticulously document the unpacking of the archive from five trunks, suitcases and

boxes, and guide readers through the contents with reproductions of letters and diaries, and photos of Kahlo's drawings and personal effects. Levine finds it all illuminating, not only regarding Kahlo but also the universally human tendencies that the archive represents. Levine's interview with the antiques-store owners recounts their fascinating acquisition of the pieces while the visual exploration focuses on Kahlo's impassioned love and hatred for her husband, Diego Rivera, whom she calls an evil fat toad, and her anxiety over her amputated leg, which manifests itself in her obsession with flight (What do I want feet for/ If I have wings to fly). This beautiful book poetically offers a fresh look at one of art's iconic women, and though Kahlo is the protagonist of the project, Levine's journey includes us all. (Nov.)

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Review "As a collector and archivist, Levine (former director of exhibitions, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) is particularly sensitive to the fragments of life one accumulates and how they can be interpreted by others. While sorting out her own life, she happened upon Frida Kahlo's personal archive, a treasure trove that had been lost for decades. This bilingual (English/Spanish) book is a record of her discovery, detailing both the objects themselves and the intimate relationships they evoked in viewers. Each object was photographed as it was unpacked and then returned to its original housing. In a very personal essay, the author charts revelations about this enigmatic artist yielded by the diary entries, recipes, sketches, and letters and a starkly annotated series of images of the techniques used for the amputation of her leg. VERDICT An illuminating find or an odd bit of miscellanea, depending upon the reader's interest in this artist's life, this book unravels for both author and reader the unique experience of a very human activity: storing away the little things by which we identify ourselves." -- Paula Frosch, Metropolitan Museum of Art, (August 19, 2009) -- Library Journal - Paula Frosch, Metropolitan Museum of Art

"The Noyolas have collaborated with Barbara Levine, a photography curator in San Miguel de Allende, on a book about the collection of more than 1,200 items, "Finding Frida Kahlo: Diaries, Letters, Recipes, Notes, Sketches, Stuffed Birds, and Other Newly Discovered Keepsakes" (written with Stephen Jaycox and due this fall from Princeton Architectural Press). It shows the clutter that the Noyolas acquired, although the couple now keep the artifacts in neat vitrines and binders in their store, La Buhardilla (the Attic)." -- Eve M. Kahn, (June 26, 2009) --The New York Times

"Beautifully documented, Finding Frida Kahlo includes lavish double-page spreads with detailed, translated captions that, for most of us, will be the closest we can get to the material. Despite a scrawled note on a used greeting card - "I am nothing more than a passing bird. Everything is temporary; nothing lasts" - Kahlo is destined to be remembered." -- Frances Atkinson, (August 14, 2009) --The Age Magazine (Australia)

"The recent discovery in a Mexican factory of two trunks full of Frida Kahlo's personal artifacts -- carefully curated by Barbara Levine in Finding Frida Kahlo -- opens up new perspectives on this endlessly fascinating cultural icon." (July 7th, 2009) --Best Hidden Gems Of The Year..., Amazon

Policing the legacy of artists can be a tough business. Nowhere is it tougher than in Mexico, where the magnetic, self-mythologizing painter Frida Kahlo (1907-54) shot from relative obscurity to iconic status only in the last quarter-century.

Now, a festering dispute over a little-known archive of ephemera attributed to Kahlo has erupted into open warfare. Despite the tantalizing possibility that some or maybe even all the material is authentic, a sharp line has been drawn in the art historical sand.

The story is marked by startling intimidation tactics that seem more a part of Tony Soprano's world

than the genteel environs of scholarly argument. Aggressive bullying by Kahlo-establishment figures is so strange that it suggests something bigger: A fading ancient regime in Mexico might be coming to an end.

Consider these four episodes:

* Ruth Alvarado Rivera, now-deceased granddaughter of the great muralist Diego Rivera, Kahlo's husband, gave a 2005 interview to Mexico City's Reforma newspaper, illustrated with photographs of several small paintings never published before. One showed a slightly damaged little canvas in which Kahlo's head was affixed to the body of a slain deer.

Retribution was swift and fierce.

Reforma ran a story the next day denouncing as outrageous fakes the Kahlo works it published just 24 hours before. The assault was led by respected critic Raquel Tibol, an elder statesman of 19th and 20th century Mexican art history, whose books include a 1983 Kahlo survey.

* A recent New York Times "Antiques" column published a freelancer's short item about a forthcoming book -- "Finding Frida Kahlo" by Barbara Levine, former exhibitions director at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and coming Nov. 1 from Princeton Architectural Press -- that includes the little Frida-deer painting, together with a previously unpublished archive of about 1,200 items (notebook pages, letters, diary entries, recipes, clothing, etc.). Within hours, a condemnatory letter was fired off to the newspaper from Carlos Phillips Olmedo, head of the executive committee of the Diego Rivera-Frida Kahlo Trust at the Central Bank of Mexico, guardian of the artists' copyrights.

The letter, which the newspaper did not publish, protested "in no way do we recognize [the archive] as originals of Frida Kahlo."

* A few weeks later in Mexico City, 11 prominent museum officials, gallery owners, art historians and artists signed an open letter decrying the imminent publication of these Kahlo "fakes." Citing no evidence for their explosive charge, the letter insisted that "the authorities and cultural institutions responsible for Mexico's artistic patrimony intervene immediately."

* London's Art Newspaper wrote a story about the letter on Aug. 20, with the headline "Art Historians Assert That 'Lost Archive' of Paintings, Drawings and Diaries Are Forged." Mary-Anne Martin, longtime New York dealer in Latin American art, was quoted at length about the book. "In my view the publishers have been the victims of a gigantic hoax," said Martin, who also signed the letter. "I am astounded it has gone as far as it has."

I'm astounded too -- but for different reasons.

For one thing, Tibol, Phillips Olmedo and Martin have never laid eyes on the material they nonetheless insist is a blatant forgery. They've not seen the little painting of a deer, nor indeed any of the archive's 1,200 artifacts.

For another, they and all the signatories to the open letter are cogs in the machinery of what could be called the Frida Kahlo Industry. That emergent enterprise took off a generation ago with the 1983 publication of the landmark "Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo" by Hayden Herrera, who also signed the joint letter. Her book performed an extraordinary feat -- a major scholarly work that also became a popular bestseller. Kahlo rightly metamorphosed from an artistic also-ran into an icon.

The doubters might not have seen the purported archive, housed in a secure back room of a gallery

in the central Mexican colonial town of San Miguel de Allende. But they do share a vested interest in Kahlo's robust market and the publishing business around it.

A dealer specializing in Latin American art had better not cross a trust as powerful as the one devoted to Rivera and Kahlo, the two biggest names in Mexico's Modern art history. A historian wishing access to Kahlo material, including reproduction rights for books, is ill-advised to stray too far outside the officially approved field. An artist critically supported by that establishment needs to be careful in speaking out. Much is at stake, socially and financially.

In Mexico, Kahlo is officially ranked an artist of the national patrimony, a formal endorsement foreign to American culture. Without official backing, an archive of previously unknown material faces high hurdles for acceptance.

A preemptive, blindly made fraud claim is a political strategy, more authoritarian than authoritative. It recalls physician and former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist asserting that Terri Schiavo, a comatose Florida woman, was not in a persistent vegetative state, based on his review of a videotape rather than the actual patient. Of course, three months later an autopsy confirmed that Schiavo had suffered severe, irreversible brain damage. Actual study of the Kahlo archive might prove similarly redemptive.

A firsthand look

As it happens, I have seen the disputed archive at the gallery -- not once, but three times in the last 18 months. Carlos Noyola and his wife, Leticia Fernández, art and antiquarian dealers in Monterrey, Mexico, for nearly four decades before moving to San Miguel a few years ago, acquired it in 2004, after a friend asked them to look at the battered little deer painting. It wasn't the only object attributed to Kahlo they were given to examine.

There was also a traditional Michoacán-style floral batea -- a painted wooden tray -- decorated with a hot-pink flower bearing Frida's eyes and initials, a pure white flower bearing those of her notoriously philandering husband and a bright yellow flower hovering above Diego, anonymously and suggestively, like a woman's flouncing skirt.

There was more. In fact, when all was said and done, the trove included 16 small oil paintings, 23 watercolors and pastels, 59 notebook pages (diary entries, recipes, etc.), 73 anatomical studies (some dated prior to Kahlo's disfiguring 1925 trolley accident), 128 pencil and crayon drawings, 129 illustrated prose-poems, and 230 letters to Carlos Pellicer, the Modernist poet and Frida's close confidant, many adorned with sketches -- skulls, insects, lizards, birds.

Mostly it's ephemera, like a small box holding 11 taxidermy hummingbirds. There are pistols, such as an ornate 1870 Remington; a tricolor Mexican flag, its central white panel altered to celebrate Leon Trotsky ("Troski") and the Communist Party, to which Kahlo and Rivera belonged; hotel bills; photographs; receipts for sales of Rivera paintings; an embroidered huipil, a traditional Mayan blouse; an intimate diary, with one entry expressing Frida's intense (and unrequited) erotic attraction to lesbian ranchera singer Chavela Vargas; a French medical text on amputation, painted over with blood-red pigments; and more.

The Kahlo cache is said to have been stored for 50 years in two wooden chests, a metal trunk, a wooden box and a battered suitcase. The forthcoming book, honest in its uncertainty about authenticity, tells a spare but reasonable history of ownership -- first given by the dying artist to sculptor Abraham Jimenez Lopez, a friend of Kahlo and Rivera's, in 1954, and then sold by him to attorney Manuel Marcue in 1979 -- as well as the Noyolas' initial efforts at verification.

Is the archive genuine? I do not know. I've seen a majority of Kahlo's approved paintings, but I'm not an authority.

It's certainly an odd assortment for a forger to bother with. The archive's drawings and paintings, all modest, cut a wide stylistic swath. Unlike Rivera, a virtuoso draftsman, the largely self-taught Kahlo had little innate facility. Her drawings are often notational, her paintings intentionally folkloric, sometimes even crude.

Some archive works verge on academic, the last way one thinks of Kahlo. Various curios might be by other hands, memorabilia she saved.

The most compelling painting shows an amputated leg wrapped in thorns or barbed wire and planted upside-down in a darkening Surrealist landscape. Sporting a winged foot and surrounded by a saw, ax, swallow and airplane, it's a secular ex-voto, traditional Mexican offering to a saint.

Nothing is truly major, ranking with the great self-portraits. As a whole, though, the artist's obsessive self-regard rings true.

Critic Ben Davis has noted that feminist Surrealism is only part of Kahlo's artistic story, one that helped catapult Herrera's marvelous biography because it corresponded with societal interests after the 1970s. Yet Kahlo's conscious "reiteration of the self, transformed into myth" is also a primary trait of Social Realist art in the 1920s and after -- the aesthetic language that created cults around Lenin, Stalin and Mao. This aspect of Kahlo's work shows her determined political sympathies for post-revolutionary Mexico, as well as for crafting her own reverential following.

What comes next

Nobody was more resistant to Frida's worshipful veneration than Dolores Olmedo Patiño, the rich and powerful collector to whom Rivera, reputed to have been her youthful lover, gave posthumous control of his and Kahlo's estates. The Rivera-Kahlo Trust's Carlos Phillips Olmedo is her son.

I made the first of several visits to Olmedo's 16th century hacienda in Xochimilco in 1984, as she was planning to turn the estate into a museum. (The Museo Dolores Olmedo opened 10 years later.) Conceived as a Rivera shrine, it features 145 of the painter's works; 900 pre-Columbian sculptures plus folk crafts, which he championed for their indigenous character; and engravings by Angelina Beloff, his conventionally talented first wife.

Each time I would ask to see Olmedo's 25 Kahlo paintings -- the largest collection anywhere, about one-eighth of Kahlo's output. She would frown, dismiss them as minor and finally relent. Usually the paintings were kept in an out-of-the-way room, lined up on the floor facing the wall.

"In the future, Kahlo will fade away," Olmedo once told *The Times*.

Just before his 1957 death, Rivera instructed Olmedo not to unseal, for a period of 15 years, the many rooms packed with Kahlo's belongings left behind at Casa Azul, the famous "blue house" in Coyoacan where the artist lived. In fact, Olmedo never unsealed them.

Finally opened after her death in 2002, they yielded 28,000 new documents, 5,800 photos, 300 garments and many paintings and drawings. Kahlo was a pack rat. Perhaps their 2004 unveiling coaxed the Noyola's archive out of hiding.

New information always comes to light. Ferocious yet cavalier denunciations don't discredit the uncertain archive, only the entrenched establishment that utters them. Generational change is

wrenching -- a woolly mammoth bellows in a tar pit -- but the tumult shows that it's certainly underway.

Brass-knuckles intimidation tactics are clear evidence for what should happen next. The archive, compelling enough for serious further study, needs sunshine -- difficult to find anywhere, but certainly unavailable in official Mexico. The Noyolas have done interesting, basic forensic research and have always been open to any scholar who would like to actually see the archive. They should move it to more neutral ground outside the country.

Here's the irony: Had it been accepted as official national patrimony, the archive would not be allowed to leave Mexico. The nation's loss could be art's gain. --L.A. Times

"I concur with Knight, only serious scholarship will tell the tale and I look forward to seeing how this one plays out..." -- Raul Gutierrez --Heading East

"The book is wonderful. Reading the translated letters by Frida cussing Diego, longing for him reveals the kind of relationship the two artists had with each other. Her erotic drawings and others are packed with symbolism and cryptic hints at dual meanings allowing for much interpretation. The design of the book is beautiful, but how could it not be? It was designed by Martin Venezky and his Appetite Engineers design shop in San Francisco." -- John Foster --Accidental Mysteries

"Finding Frida Kahlo by Barbara Levine and Stephen Jaycox is not necessarily what one might expect. Neither a biography nor document about Kahlo's work, this book is an itemized account of the contents of Kahlo's alleged personal archives, found in an antiques store in Mexico's San Miguel de Allende. Inside an old suitcase, two wooden chests and a box, and a metal trunk are letters, diary pages, stuffed hummingbirds, small pieces of artwork, and a variety of other ephemeral fragments of Frida Kahlo's life. Translations of the notes serve as annotations to the photographs of the contents, whose authenticity is still in dispute. But in some ways this book is more about the very notion of personal archives and collections than the famous Mexican artist. How are we reflected in what we leave behind?" --Mocoloco

"Independent curator Levine (Around the World) encountered a mysterious, important and long-hidden collection of more than 1,200 of what are reputed to be Frida Kahlo's personal items in the back room of an antiques store in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. (The Associated Press has reported that the Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo Trust has charged that the materials in this book are forged. Mexican prosecutors are investigating.) Levine and Jaycox meticulously document the unpacking of the archive from five trunks, suitcases and boxes, and guide readers through the contents with reproductions of letters and diaries, and photos of Kahlo's drawings and personal effects. Levine finds it all illuminating, not only regarding Kahlo but also the universally human tendencies that the archive represents. Levine's interview with the antiques-store owners recounts their fascinating acquisition of the pieces while the visual exploration focuses on Kahlo's impassioned love and hatred for her husband, Diego Rivera, whom she calls an evil fat toad, and her anxiety over her amputated leg, which manifests itself in her obsession with flight (What do I want feet for/ If I have wings to fly). This beautiful book poetically offers a fresh look at one of art's iconic women, and though Kahlo is the protagonist of the project, Levine's journey includes us all. (Nov.)" --Publishers Weekly

"A verbal civil war continues to rage in the Mexican art world as Kahlo experts argue over the authenticity of a once obscure Kahlo archive that will be featured in Finding Frida Kahlo, a book by Barbara Levine due out from Princeton Architectural Press in November." --Artinfo

"Christopher Knight argues in the Los Angeles Times that the dispute can be viewed as an allegory for the complex mixture of academic, financial, and historical interests that become entangled in managing a famous artists legacy. Those who claim the archive is a forgery accuse opponents of exploiting Kahlos popularity. In turn, supporters of authenticity suggest that critics are attempting to protect their own financial and academic interests in Kahlos work by limiting access to what could be new material outside of their control. Mary-Anne Martin, an art dealer who has sold works by Kahlo in the past and has not viewed the collection, is among those who are skeptical of the archives authenticity. If I had to jump on a plane every time somebody made a fake painting, I would never get any work done, she said." --Artinfo

"That's the rhetorical question the author of a new book posed to the New York Times in a fascinating and still unfolding story concerning Mexicos most famous artist (not counting Kahlos husband, Diego Rivera). The material Barbara Levine refers to is a trove of some 1,200 recently discovered artworks, diaries, letters, and artifacts attributed to Kahlo, which she explores in the newly published Finding Frida Kahlo. Although officials at Princeton Architectural Press say the book states clearly that authentication of the works is still an issue, according to the Times, it is not a central part of the book (let alone its thesis). The story about the discovery has its own fairly-tale-like quality, involving an art and antiques dealer, a reclusive Mexico City lawyer, and a wood carver in the mountain town of San Miguel de Allende. The carver is said to have made frames for Kahlo, who in turn is said to have entrusted to him several trunks and boxes of her possessions. Now the circle of characters has expanded to include a grand-daughter and other relatives of Diego Rivera; a host of Kahlo scholars and art experts (self-appointed and otherwise), including artists who worked with her and Rivera; officials from Kahlos trust; and handwriting and chemical-analysis experts. And, naturally, more lawyers! There's also a criminal complaint filed in Mexico and attempts to halt the sale of the book in the U.S., not to mention a whole lot at stake, financially and otherwise. (The Walkers presentation of Kahlos 2007-2008 touring retrospective was among the highest-attended exhibitions here). So stay tuned. And since everyone's an expert, check out the Times" -- Julie Caniglia --Artslant

"It is a story almost too good to be real: in an antique store in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, a curator finds a trove of personal effects from one of the twentieth century's most beloved artists. In an exquisite new book titled Finding Frida Kahlo, Barbara Levine, the former director of exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, explores a trove of artist Frida Kahlos personal effects; the sort of stuff we throw out. The odds and ends give us more of what we have longed for more images and insight into the life of an artist who built her career on looking at her life. The book itself is a precious and intimate experience. We get to share in Levines experience, carefully opening the chests, suitcase, box and trunk which contained some 1,200 personal items belonging to Kahlo. In turning the pages we feel we are standing beside Levine in La Buhardilla Antiquarios (The Attic Antiques) as she carefully sifts through the material, trying to document, preserve and understand it all." --Wilsonart Laminate - The Statement

"So I'm excited that Barbara Levine's Finding Frida Kahlo has made it possible to connect again with what touched me about the artist in the first place. A lovingly photographed archive of recently discovered personal effects -- unsent letters, hand-painted boxes, love potions, recipes, sketches, and mash notes alongside gruesome diagrams on amputation and a pile of dessicated hummingbirds -- the book reveals the woman behind the myth. Levine writes insightfully about how a private archive acts as a splintered, mysterious, and elliptical kind of self portrait." --Open Book Toronto

"I have been fascinated by Frida Kahlo for ages, due equally to her startling art and passionate life. In Finding Frida Kahlo, Barbara Levine quite literally discovers the artist in a bigger way than modern scholars can imagine. Levine is, as she notes in the book's introduction, a collector. She has

written about this in previous books, and was contemplating a title on her own personal archive when she stumbled upon an apparent cache of Kahlo's art, diaries, and other ephemera in an antique store in Mexico. The owners obtained the collection from an intriguing source, and had it surveyed and proven as her work and possessions by acknowledged experts. (Be aware that not everyone agrees on this point, however, and there is an ongoing battle about the collection's authenticity. This has brought some backlash to the book, although I think Levine makes her case effectively, and is clear about the ongoing issue of provenance in the text.)

Kahlo apparently had a penchant for leaving items with various people in an attempt to make sure her legacy would be preserved. Levine quickly realized that not only were the objects themselves powerful stuff, but the manner in which they had been grouped together was equally significant. With collaborator Stephen Jaycox she set out to photograph and study this new Frida Kahlo archive. Along with her commentary, an extensive interview with the antique shop's owners and an overview of Kahlo's life and loves, *Finding Frida Kahlo* is a treasure chest of artistic endeavors, a peek into one incredible woman's life, and a look at how we preserve our own history.

While I can clearly see *Finding Frida Kahlo* as irresistible for fans, its oversized full color format is the sort of lush reading experience that makes it appear like the ultimate biography for teens. Kahlo loved Diego Rivera and hated him; she was filled with sorrow and she was euphoric; her friendships were deeply personal, intensely loyal and determined. Can you think of a better teen friendly heroine? High school and college students who have not fallen under the artist's spell are going to sink into this review of her diaries, letters, artwork and clothing (plus so many other magical odds and ends) as if finding a complicated kindred soul. After her chatty introduction and interview in the antique store, Levine wisely stands back and lets Kahlo do all the talking. It is her words that narrate the archive's display, and her emotion that carries the book forward. This is how you meet Frida Kahlo and fall hard for her near manic determination to love and live, regardless of the turbulent times and traumas she suffered. Levine is always looking for evidence of how we live, and Kahlo was a woman determined to leave a passion-filled record behind. Their 'meeting' is a magical combustible mix, and for teens looking for someone to understand and respect their compelling dramas, *Finding Frida Kahlo* could well be life-altering. For a few sexy admissions, it remains best for older readers, but they are ones who could best appreciate what Levine and Jaycox discovered in Mexico. There is such more to Frida Kahlo to discover, and while she was never -- not once -- mentioned in a single one of my high school classes, I salute teens who find her on their own, and embrace her as a woman worthy of their time and attention." --Bookslut

"*Finding Frida Kahlo* presents, for the first time in print, an astonishing lost archive of one of the twentieth century's most revered artists. Hidden from view for over half a century, this richly illustrated, intimate portrait overflows with fascinating details about Kahlo's romances, friendships, and business affairs during a three-decade period, beginning in the 1920s when she was a teenager and ending just before she died in 1954. Full of ardent desires, seething fury, and outrageous humor, *Finding Frida Kahlo* is a rare glimpse into an exuberant and troubled existence: A vivid diary entry records her sexual encounter with a woman named Doroti; a painted box contains eleven stuffed hummingbirds, concealed beneath a letter in which she laments her discovery that her husband, Diego Rivera, had been monstrously dissecting 'these beautiful creatures' to extract an aphrodisiac; an altered French medical book describes the pain she was suffering from the amputation of her right leg, written by Kahlo upon pages that illustrate an amputation technique; a letter to a friend expresses her loneliness, and a simple request for coconut candies. Frida Kahlo never wrote an autobiography. Instead, she left behind a much more complex material universe. *Finding Frida Kahlo* offers scholars and fans alike an opportunity to examine firsthand Kahlo's secret world and draw their own conclusions about how she imagined her place in it." --Photo Eye

"I have been fascinated by Frida Kahlo for ages, due equally to her startling art and passionate life. In *Finding Frida Kahlo*, Barbara Levine quite literally discovers the artist in a bigger way than modern scholars can imagine. Levine is, as she notes in the book's introduction, a collector. She has written about this in previous books, and was contemplating a title on her own personal archive when she stumbled upon an apparent cache of Kahlo's art, diaries, and other ephemera in an antique store in Mexico. The owners obtained the collection from an intriguing source, and had it surveyed and proven as her work and possessions by acknowledged experts. (Be aware that not everyone agrees on this point, however, and there is an ongoing battle about the collection's authenticity. This has brought some backlash to the book, although I think Levine makes her case effectively, and is clear about the ongoing issue of provenance in the text.) Kahlo apparently had a penchant for leaving items with various people in an attempt to make sure her legacy would be preserved. Levine quickly realized that not only were the objects themselves powerful stuff, but the manner in which they had been grouped together was equally significant. With collaborator Stephen Jaycox she set out to photograph and study this new Frida Kahlo archive. Along with her commentary, an extensive interview with the antique shop's owners and an overview of Kahlo's life and loves, *Finding Frida Kahlo* is a treasure chest of artistic endeavors, a peek into one incredible woman's life, and a look at how we preserve our own history. While I can clearly see *Finding Frida Kahlo* as irresistible for fans, its oversized full color format is the sort of lush reading experience that makes it appear like the ultimate biography for teens. Kahlo loved Diego Rivera and hated him; she was filled with sorrow and she was euphoric; her friendships were deeply personal, intensely loyal and determined. Can you think of a better teen friendly heroine? High school and college students who have not fallen under the artist's spell are going to sink into this review of her diaries, letters, artwork and clothing (plus so many other magical odds and ends) as if finding a complicated kindred soul. After her chatty introduction and interview in the antique store, Levine wisely stands back and lets Kahlo do all the talking. It is her words that narrate the archive's display, and her emotion that carries the book forward. This is how you meet Frida Kahlo and fall hard for her near manic determination to love and live, regardless of the turbulent times and traumas she suffered. Levine is always looking for evidence of how we live, and Kahlo was a woman determined to leave a passion-filled record behind. Their 'meeting' is a magical combustible mix, and for teens looking for someone to understand and respect their compelling dramas, *Finding Frida Kahlo* could well be life-altering. For a few sexy admissions, it remains best for older readers, but they are ones who could best appreciate what Levine and Jaycox discovered in Mexico. There is such more to Frida Kahlo to discover, and while she was never -- not once -- mentioned in a single one of my high school classes, I salute teens who find her on their own, and embrace her as a woman worthy of their time and attention." --Bookslut

"Intended as a surefire best seller..." --Art in America

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