

Diego and Frida in San Angel

Blanca Garduño Pulido*

Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo were married August 21, 1929. The next year they went to San Francisco to paint *Working on the Mural* at the University of California. By 1931, the young architect Juan O’Gorman had designed two unique functionalist houses, completed July 31, 1932, in Mexico City’s San Angel district, as can be seen in the series of photos taken by Frida’s father Guillermo Kahlo, famous for his photographs of monuments. Rivera and Kahlo occupied the houses from January 1934 on, when they returned after their extended stay in the United States.

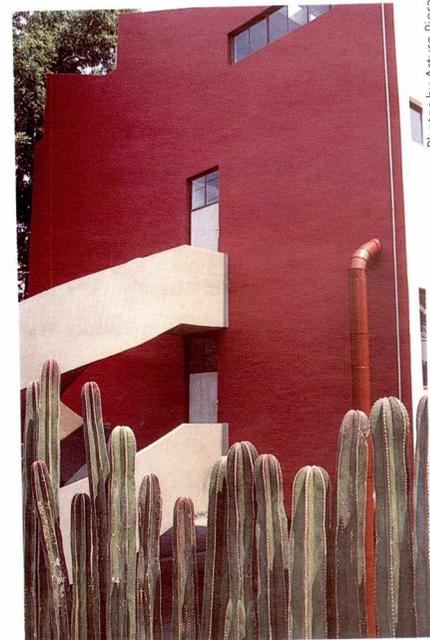
In 1934, Rivera began his work *The Mexico of Today and the Future* on the stairway of Mexico’s National Palace. His portraits include friends and relatives, like photographer Tina Modotti,¹

children like those in *Portrait of the Little Girl Juanita Rosas* and his wife Frida. A year later he would draw indigenous women and children selling calla lilies, landscapes and people from daily life like in *The Murder of Manlio Fabio Altamirano*. People and their work, fiestas or sorrows: nothing escaped his artist’s eye in this house under whose roof Guadalupe Marín (his previous wife) and movie actresses Dolores del Río, María Félix and Silvia Pinal all posed.² In this studio, Diego did most of his easel work (almost 3,000 canvases) and he lived there until the day he died, November 24, 1957.

In the San Angel house, Frida matured as a painter and produced works like *The Warning Eye*, *A Few Pinpricks*, *Little Dead Dimas*, *My Nana and I*,

has been told and retold in different biographies and even in novels, like the one by Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska, *Tinsima*, Era, Mexico City, 1992.

² In different periods, these three actresses were the reigning queens of Mexican film. [Editor’s Note.]



The entrance.

Photos by Arturo Pierra

The Fruit of the Land, *Self-Portrait with Monkey* and the series of portraits that include the famous *The Two Fridas*. In 1941 Frida moved back to her parental home in Coyoacán (today the Frida Kahlo Museum) a few days after the April 14 death of Guillermo Kahlo and lived there until her own death, July 14, 1954.

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¹ Tina Modotti was a famous Mexican photographer —both because of her spectacular person and her political activity— whose life

Diego's and Frida's studio houses hosted visitors from all walks of life: politicians, artists, literati, magnates, intellectuals and women, always women. Through that house came Leon Trotsky, Lázaro Cárdenas, Nelson Rockefeller and Pablo Neruda, among others.

In 1938, the French philosopher and poet André Breton, the father of Surrealism, arrived at San Angel, the scene of artistic production and the flow of lives and people. He called Frida's work "the product of a wounded palette from which a red shadow emanates, that dark color of fire that is the color of the earth of Mexico."

THE DIEGO RIVERA STUDIO-INBA MUSEUM

Accompanied by the history and spirit of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, the studio-houses of San Angel became the Diego Rivera Studio Museum December 16, 1986, as part of the celebration of the centennial of Diego's birth (1886-1957). From then on, the museum's mission of promoting culture has fostered the preservation, research, exhibition and dissemination of the lives and work of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, as well as those of the architect, designer, builder, painter and muralist Juan O'Gorman (1905-1982) and their contemporaries.

In the 10 years after its founding, the Diego Rivera Studio Museum held 11 permanent exhibitions, 67 temporary exhibits, 69 touring Mexican shows and 33 international shows (some of which were presented in



Frida's studio-house.

museums in the United States and Central and South America). It also put out 40 publications contributing to the knowledge about Rivera, Kahlo and O'Gorman, as well as to the history of art in Mexico. Other activities included workshops, guided tours, lectures, book presentations and informational programs about the museum.

DIEGO'S AND FRIDA'S STUDIO-HOUSE MUSEUM

Seventy-three years after being built, and after eight years of research, the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA) decided in 1995 to restore the houses' original appearance, making them the only example of modernist Mexican architecture extant today. Coordinated by the INBA Office for the Architecture and Conservation of Artistic Buildings, the work on Frida's studio-house lasted from August 14 to December 12, 1995, while the restoration of

Diego's studio-house took from July 1 to December 18 of the following year. The federal government, the National Council for Culture and the Arts and the National Institute of Fine Arts presented Mexico and the world with the "twin houses," giving them their new name, the Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo Studio-House Museum.

Visitors can now see the architecture as originally designed and built by Juan O'Gorman as well as the temporary exhibits of their work and that of their contemporaries. Ready for the twenty-first century, the exhibits also display innovations in the field of museology. *W*



Diego's studio-house.