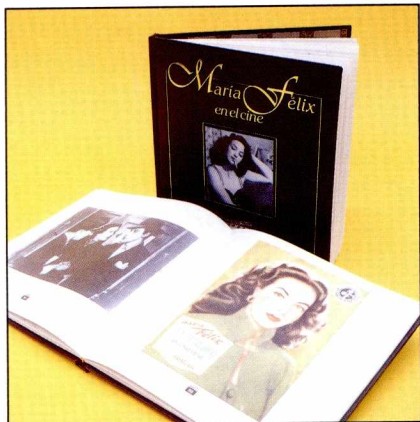


María Félix en el cine

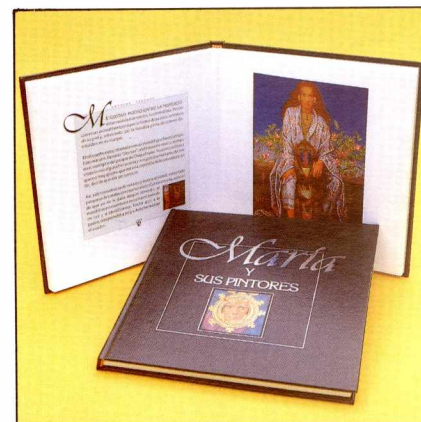
Aguirre, Eugenio and Aguilar, María Aurora,
Editorial Coordination
Noriega, Ricardo and Belmar, Marco Antonio
Design
Ediciones Culturales Internacionales, SA de CV
Mexico, 1992, 111 pp.



María Félix in the world of art

María Félix y sus pintores

Aguirre, Eugenio
Editorial Coordination
Noriega, Ricardo and Belmar, Marco Antonio
Design
Ediciones Culturales Internacionales, SA de CV
México, 1992, 93 pp.



The beautiful and controversial María Félix or “Lovely María” as the famous Mexican composer Agustín Lara called her, “La Doña” or “The Boss” as she is respectfully known by her fellow-countrymen, has been immortalized in films and paintings.

She was an outstanding figure during the “Golden Age” of Mexican cinema, appearing in 47 films produced between 1943 and 1971.

Her beautiful eyes are remembered for their cold, hard gaze, which is one reason why this strong, daring, domineering woman, both respected and feared, is known as “The Boss.” It explains why she always gets what she wants and also makes her one of the world’s greatest divas.

As homage to the actress and in recognition of her work, the National University of Mexico has begun a project on all her films called “The complete filmography of María Félix” so that “future generations may have access to ‘the stories’ that made María Félix a part of our history.”¹

María Félix en el cine provides a summary of all her films as well as relevant information about the film, giving names of other cast members, directors, producers, screen writers, cinematographers, music directors, sound engineers, scenic designers and editors. It also shows scenes from some of the films.

¹ Iván Trujillo Bolio, *María Félix en el cine*, p. 13.

By contrast, in *María y sus pintores* “La Doña” herself gives an account of the stories behind her paintings. “Why did I have my portrait painted throughout my life? Casting back, I can recall being heart-broken in Paris, with the grey city acting as a backdrop for my grief. Jorge, yes, Jorge Negrete, had just died. 1953 had left me an embittered widow in danger of staying one forever. I felt I had to react in the face of adversity. After thinking over the matter for several days, I came upon a solution I have never regretted: I decided to have my portrait painted.”

That was how Leonor Fini’s “The Sun Queen”, came to be painted. The portrait originally included a tortoise whose face bore a striking resemblance to Agustín Lara. When María realized this, she had the painting changed. Thus Leonor left only the tortoise shell, covered with precious stones.

“I thought Agustín was extremely good-looking, although everyone else wondered how I could possibly live with such a monstrosity. I agree he wasn’t exactly handsome, but he was certainly very interesting. A great composer. That’s where his beauty lay. I have the ability, the privilege, of finding beauty where most people see nothing but ugliness.”

In Antoine Tzapoff’s “Tehuana,” one of María’s favorites, she is wearing



Lovely fiery siren.



Daniel Nierman.

Antoine Tzapoff, Tehuana (1991-92), wooden frame (1870), 2.10 x 1.60 m.



Daniel Nierman.



Antoine Tzapoff, Portrait of María riding a rhinoceros bareback (1985-86), solid repoussé silver frame, 2 x 1 m. (approx).

three gold bracelets that together spell out “Doña María Bonita” in diamonds, a present from her great admirer and suitor, Agustín Lara.

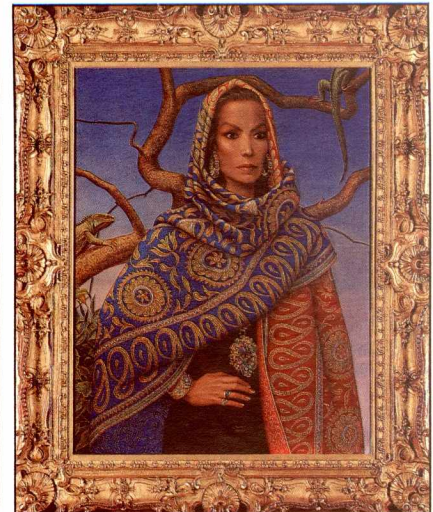
This portrait was painted at María’s request, to make amends for the one by Diego Rivera showing her dressed as a Tehuana. “I never liked the painting, which is why I don’t have it in my house. Diego painted me in a see-through white dress that

showed me nude. I didn’t like being painted that revealingly.”

So “La Doña” had the dress plastered over by a workman. The painting was “retouched” and is currently owned by the singer Juan Gabriel, although no-one knows how he acquired it

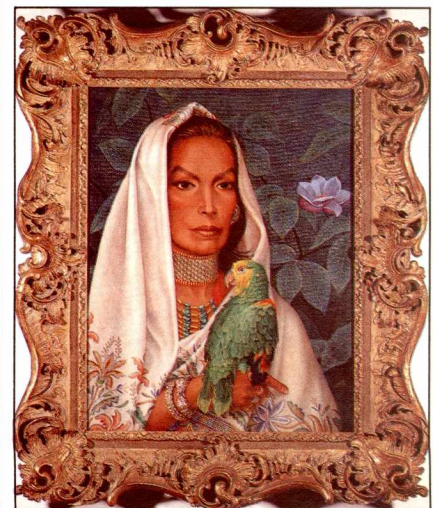
The value of María’s portraits lies in their subject and the size of most of them, the artists’ talent and the fact

that they are hung in carved wooden frames dating from the 17th century onward or in solid silver frames. The exception is the triptych, “Dream of the fiery siren,” whose frame was specially designed by the painter, Leonora Carrington, for her first portrait of María.



Antoine Tzapoff, Doña Iguana (1984), wooden frame (1850-60), 1.28 x 1.08 m.

Leonora’s subsequent portraits are proof of “La Doña’s” ability to always get what she wants. The artist was reluctant to paint a second portrait, but María used her ingenuity and armed herself with patience. She took Leonora mariachis on her birthday and her



Antoine Tzapoff, María and Pedro (1981-82), Italian wooden frame (1830).

Jorge Pablo de Aguinaco.

Jorge Pablo de Aguinaco.

request was granted the following day. From that day on, a firm friendship sprang up between the two women.

The artist christened the second portrait, "The tarot girl," because of María's fondness for card games, especially poker and gin rummy. The furry, kite-shaped figure emerging from the stole draped round María represents the "bad vibrations" leaving her body. "I have always been grateful to Leonora for that."

Among smaller paintings of "La Doña," four by Estanislao Lepri stand out. In one of them, María is shown as a Monarch butterfly, surrounded by other "jewels that fly." In "Queen of birds," María is transformed into a cockatoo amid other beautiful birds. In "Empress of foliage" María's face is shown as the pistil of a huge calla lily, with other exotic plants around her.

In the fourth portrait, "María's ace of hearts" a griffin offers María this letter, "The ace of hearts is the love card. It is a card I have always held. No doubt about that! I think I have had good fortune throughout my life, but I am also aware that my strength of will has been a key factor."

Bridget Tichenor's portraits of María were a joint venture with Antoine Tzapoff. As Tichenor did not regard herself as a good portrait artist, she asked Tzapoff to paint the faces.

Of the painting, "Glass cage," María Félix



Bridget Tichenor and Antoine Tzapoff, Glass cage, 95 x 70 cm.

remarks, "I am neither frightened of nor repelled by snakes. On the contrary, I think they are wise, secretive, creatures, that do not immediately reveal themselves but know how to move slowly and softly into the cold areas of the universe, the universe that one sometimes constructs on one's own in order to kindle the flame of renewed passions."

The person who has painted most portraits of her is Antoine Tzapoff, her current companion. Tzapoff has painted eleven so far, since he promised her a new portrait for every year of their life together. The book shows nine; not included are "María and Pedro," finished after the book was published, and "Doña Iguana" (1984). All the clothes and accessories shown in the paintings are the actress' own and ones that she personally chose.

"Portrait of María riding a rhinoceros bareback," shows her wearing a Chinese

royal gown and holding a walking-stick. The gown is embroidered with dragons with five-fingered claws, a symbol of royalty in Imperial China. The walking-stick alludes to a slight leg affliction that María had at the time of the portrait (1985-86).

At María's insistence, Tzapoff painted "La Doña with Blackamoor," of the two of them, although in fact



Leonor Fini, The Sun queen 1.19 x 0.88 m.



Daniel Nierman.



Daniel Nierman.

Estanislao Lepri, María's ace of hearts, gilded wooden frame, 71 x 47 cm.

three people are shown: María and Antoine dressed up as North American Indians, and Antoine once more as a wooden Blackamoor.

María y sus pintores is full of interesting anecdotes such as the story of María's first portrait by Antoine Tzapoff, "La Doña wearing a Huichol costume." When the friend who had commissioned the painting refused María's request for it, she stole it from his house during the dinner at which she was introduced to the painter.

She also talks about her personal relationship with some of the great



Antoine Tzapoff, La Doña with blackamoor, (1981-82), Italian wooden frame (1830).

artists who painted her. "I had an intense friendship with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and shared an important part of my life with them. There is no better proof of this relationship than the phrase on the front of the house where they lived that said, "This house belongs to Diego, Frida and María."

Now that Fridamania is at its peak, it is a pity there are no portraits of María by Frida that would have immortalized our passion for both women ❧

Marybel Toro Gayol
Managing Editor.



Daniel Nierman.

Leonora Carrington, The tarot girl (1965), 2.04 x 1.83 m.