



The Blue House Reveals Its Treasures

Museo Frida Kahlo
Londres 247, Col. Del Carmen, Coyoacán, 04000
Phone: [55] 5554-5999
www.museofridakahlo.org
Open Tuesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



The Casa Azul (Blue House) in Coyoacán is where Frida Kahlo spent her childhood and lived with Diego Rivera until the day she died. It has now brought out its treasures, hidden under lock and key for almost five decades in commodes, wardrobes, glass cases, trunks and, above all, in the bathroom adjoining the room where Diego used to sleep. The bathroom door was sealed in 1957 on orders from Diego himself, who asked his friend Dolores Olmedo to keep the archives there and make sure no one opened it until 15 years after his death.

Three years ago, on the fiftieth anniversary of Frida Kahlo's death, the treasures began to come out into the light, and this year, to commemorate the centennial of her birth, the Blue House decided to share all of them.

Via photographs, letters, books, posters, dresses, sketches, toys, paintbrushes, palettes, paintings, paint thinners and every imaginable kind of object, Frida and

Photos by Mauricio Degollado.

Diego show details of their daily, personal life: their illnesses, their loves, their loyalties, their beliefs, their interests and their taste in clothes.

Specialists agree that there have been no major revelations, but the new information will enrich our knowledge about the work and lives of these two icons of Mexican art from new perspectives.

BENEATH THE DUST AND THE SPIDER WEBS

The people who took off the seals had to deal with the dust and spider webs before getting to Frida's corsets, her dresses, letters, medical file, medications, bed clothing, thousands of documents, cosmetics and jewelry. The room was turned into a vault full of the technology necessary for maintaining the objects at appropriate temperature and humidity levels, while a small portion of the items were exhibited for the public, distributed throughout the house.

Some objects have remained just as the two artists left them. Frida's work table, next to her easel and wheelchair, still has ID-sized photographs stuck to it. There





are her palettes, her pencils, bottles with paint thinner, jars of paint, mixers, toys and even a fetus in formaldehyde. This same room contains Diego Rivera's work table.

Frida and Diego's 2,170 books include art and literature, poetry and politics in several languages, even Russian. In many, Frida made notes or sketches, particularly in the medical books that show her interest in investigating about the illnesses she suffered from throughout her life. The show was divided into six rooms, including previously unknown, surprising Frida Kahlo drawings, her Tehuana outfit, and signed photographs, testimony to her insomnia; outstanding drawings by Diego, such as the outlines of his first mural, *The Creation* (1921-1922), in the National High School, the sketch of the mural for the National Autonomous University of Mexico Olympic Stadium and a landscape from his early impressionist period. It also displays a selection of documents from Diego and Frida's archives, correspondence with friends and between the two of them; books and magazines illustrated with Diego's work; nineteenth-century lithographs that Diego liked and referred to for his murals; as well as publications that are indicators of the couple's visual culture. There are posters about

exhibitions and political and artistic events and what is apparently the only poster Diego ever did for the National Lottery. A newspaper reports on the couple's marriage, August 21, 1929. One of her dresses, a headdress, a book and a corset suffice to represent Frida's personality. Among the collection's gems are facsimiles of pre-Hispanic and sixteenth-century codices that Diego collected, studied and loved. This is where he obtained part of his aesthetic sense for interpreting the pre-Hispanic.

When Diego donated the furniture, buildings, art works and objects to the people of Mexico through a Bank of Mexico trust managed by the Diego Rivera Anahuacalli and Frida Kahlo Blue House Museums, he stipulated that not a single piece could leave there. So, the 22,105 catalogued objects must remain in the Coyoacán residence. **MM**

