

Frida Kahlo - connections between surrealist women in Mexico
27th september to 10th january

Curated by researcher Teresa Arcq, **Frida Kahlo: connections between surrealist women in Mexico** exhibition, with some 100 works by 16 artists, reveals how an intricate network with numerous characters was set up around the figure of **Frida Kahlo** (July 6, 1907, Coyoacán, Mexico - July 13, 1954, Coyoacán, Mexico). This extract focuses especially women artists born or living in Mexico, acting as the protagonists - alongside Kahlo – of powerful productions, such as **Maria Izquierdo**, **Remedios Varo** and **Leonora Carrington**.

Throughout her life, **Frida Kahlo** painted only 143 screens. In this exhibition, rare and unique in Brazil, about 20 of them have been put together, in addition to 13 works on paper – nine drawings, two collages and two lithographs -, providing the Brazilian public with a broad overview of her plastic thinking. Her strong presence further pervades the exhibition through the works of other participating artists who depicted her iconic figure. Through photography, the works of **Lola Álvarez Bravo**, **Lucienne Bloch** and **Kati Horna** are to be highlighted. Images of Frida are also impregnated on the lenses of Nickolas Muray, Bernard Silberstein, Hector Garcia, Martim Munkácsi and a lithograph by Diego Rivera, *Naked (Frida Kahlo)*, 1930.

Among Mexican women artists related to Surrealism, the abundance of symbolic self-portraits and portraits come out as a surprise. Out of the 20 paintings by Frida in this exhibition, six are self-portraits. There are two more of her paintings that bring her presence, as in *El abrazo de amor del Universo, la terra (Mexico)*, *Diego, yo y el señor Xólotl*, 1933, and *Diego em mi Pensamiento*, 1943, plus a lithograph, *Frida y el aborto*, 1932. As underscored by Teresa Arcq, the symbolic self-portraits and portraits stress a provocative break that separates what is public from what is strictly private. According to the curator, it is impressive to realize how these artists subvert the canon to have a journey into their psyche, laden with symbols and personal myths. “In some of her self-portraits, **Frida Kahlo**, **Maria Izquierdo** and **Rosa Rolanda** carefully elected the identification with the pre-Hispanic past and the indigenous cultures of Mexico, wearing ornaments and accessories that evoke powerful women such as goddesses or *tehuanas*, appropriating the identities of these Amazon matriarchs”, she says.

The confluence of groups made up of European exiled women such as the English **Leonora Carrington**, the French **Alice Rahon**, the Spaniard **Remedios Varo** and the Hungarian photographer **Kati Horna**, along with artists who came from the United States, as **Bridget Tichenor** and **Rosa Rolanda**, who stayed in Mexico for the rest of their lives, as well as other visitors related to Surrealism and attracted by Mexico’s ancient cultures, as the French **Jacqueline Lamba** and **Bona de Mandiargues**, and **Sylvia Fein** -, have favored a creative intellectual atmosphere and a complete network of relationships and influences with Kahlo and other Mexican artists. “The cultural diversity - rich in myths, rituals and a myriad of spiritual systems and beliefs -

influenced their creations, as transformed. The surrealist strategy of mask and costume, which in Mexico is part of everyday rituals surrounding life, and death in the realm of the sacred, also worked as a resource to address the matter of identity and gender”, adds Arcq.

As pointed out by Paulo Miyada, curator of Instituto Tomie Ohtake, among paintings, sculptures and photographs - as well as documents, photographic records, catalogs and stories – this exhibition allows confronting a quite challenging face of surrealism. To Miyada, intensity, drama and subjectivity of these artists’ works make this collection disturbing, even for those more acquainted with this artistic movement, which originally emerged in France in the 1920s, having as its largest predicate trying to escape the realism and rationality empire , leaning towards the unconscious, chance and dream. “In the production of artists connected to Surrealism that have been to Mexico, the topics already intensely addressed in the Surrealism debate multiply and go beyond many borders, as reflected in poignant and unforgettable images by their colors and imposing traits, by elements of the Mexican native culture, by confrontational gestures, and contempt for any convention identifiable with the good traditional bourgeois taste,” he adds.

The exhibition held by Instituto Tomie Ohtake was sponsored by Bradesco and IRB - Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil, co-sponsored by SESI, and supported by Arezzo, Calvin Klein and Tozzini. Its organization relied on the invaluable cooperation of SRE - Secretary of Foreign Relations of Mexico, the Mexican Embassy in Brazil, the INBA - Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, CONACULTA – Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, and CPTM - the Tourism Board of Mexico.