

Self Portraits

Artist Frida Kahlo was one of Mexico's greatest artists who painted mostly self-portraits after she was severely injured in a bus accident in 1925. During her recovery from the accident, Kahlo began her painting career. Kahlo later became politically active, fighting for the rights of the working class and poor people, and the rights of women. She exhibited her paintings in Paris and Mexico before her death in 1954.

The Frida Kahlo self portrait below, is titled “Frieda and Diego Rivera,” 1931, and features a self portrait of the artist herself and her husband, painter and activist Diego Rivera. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art provides us with a fun fact about the painting:

“Microscopic examinations of this painting show us that Kahlo originally painted herself wearing a pink dress with blue decoration and pink shoes, instead of the green dress and red and green shoes she wears in the final painting. Look at the different colors Kahlo used to depict herself and her husband, the artist Diego Rivera. What do you think about the choice of colors for each of the figures?”

Take a moment to explore this painting, thinking about and answering the following questions:

- What is happening in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How would you describe the people in the picture? Who do you think is the most important figure? What do you see that makes you think that?
- What clues in the painting tell you about who these people are and where they are from?

Now it's your turn to try your hand at creating a self-portrait. You can choose to create your self-portrait however you want, either drawing with a pen or pencil, coloring with crayons or colored pencils, or painting your portrait. It's all up to you, after all, you are the artist!

Here are some tips for creating a self-portrait:

- We live in an age when most of us have smartphones, so first take a selfie. Pose yourself so that you have some areas of light and shadow, this will help give your self-portrait dimension. Remember to turn off the flash, otherwise this will flatten your image.
- Use your selfie to draw out your self-portrait.
- Every element that you see is, simply, a shape, line, and color. This goes for painting landscapes as well as portraits, focus on depicting the specific shapes, lines, and colors you see in your portrait.

- Focus on the big aspects of the portrait and put those in first before adding details.
- Once you have the basic proportions and dimensions of your face, add in the details and focus on the light and dark areas of the portrait to add depth.
- Once you finish with your self-portrait, share it with us! We would love to see your artistic eye and your creativity in developing your self-portrait.

