

THE STUDY OF SIGNS IN *FRIDA* (2002): EXPLORING THE CREATIVE NEXUS BETWEEN THE FILM AND THE PAINTINGS

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Abstract

The symbiotic link between the film *Frida* (2002) and the artworks of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo were examined with this study. In order to locate the Frida Kahlo paintings that were included in the film, this study analyses how they relate to the plot and settings, in a qualitative methodology. The formal analysis of those paintings discovered that they were used in a variety of ways to enhance the story in the film, including: to provide Kahlo's thoughts a visual expression, to offer comments on the film's topics and to establish a feeling of continuity between the many scenes. The semiotic analysis on denotative and connotative meaning was applied on the relevant scenes of the film *Frida* (2002). According to the study's findings, combining film and art can be a potent approach to communicate a story and produce a visually appealing film experience.

Keywords: Frida Kahlo, *Frida* (2002), Film, Artwork, Semiotics, Formal Analysis.

Introduction

For studying the dynamic duo of film and painting, each of the painters' biographical films can be considered significant. Undeniably, painting and film are interconnected where many theorists view painting as a forerunner of film, and many directors have given their films a painting-like frame. To study this interconnection, this study has chosen Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and the biographical film *Frida* (2002) directed by Julie Taymor, to explore Frida's artwork while assessing the relevance of her paintings in the film.

Background of the study

A realm full of mystics and fantasy is created when two of such art forms brilliantly coincide. Such instances are common in the film industry. Films can also be inspired by other forms of art, such as music, poetry, sculpture, etc. Similarly, painting and film are similar arts; the only difference is the medium (Barman,

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2022). In other words, there is a strong symbiosis between painting and film. Both may engulf the observer, evoke one's feelings, and establish a mood through color, composition, and frequently without using words. Directors like Terrace Mallick, Paul Thomas Anderson, Martin Scorsese, Alfred Hitchcock etc. were often used to create a scene from a painting (Barman, 2022). Also, the filmmaker and photographer Vugar Efendi utilized this connection and claimed that art inspires film and film inspires art (Traditi, 2016). Nevertheless, films about painters have consistently been able to bring all the feelings and ideas that surround their work, serving as excellent homages to their lives in a visually stunning but entertaining mode. By studying the film *Frida* (2002) and the paintings used in it, this article aims to tie these all features together.

Why the film Frida (2002)?

Apart from Julie Taymor's film *Frida* (2002), there are also some other art shows, documentaries, films, dramas and telefilms on the life and paintings of Frida Kahlo-*Frida Kahlo & Tina Modotti* (1983) by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo* (2005) by Amy Stencher, *Chez Frida Kahlo* (2011) by Xavier Villetard, *Frida. Viva la Vida* (2002) by Giovanni Troilo, *Frida Kahlo* (2020) by Ali Ray and *Frida Kahlo's Corset*. Among the seventy (70) biographical films on painters listed on IMDb (authoritative source on online database of information related to films, television series, podcasts, home videos, video games, and streaming content online), the film *Frida* (2002) got placed on number two (02) in the *popularity* list, number four (04) in the *number of vote* list and number sixteen (16) in the *IMDb rating list*. Also, the film *Frida* (2002) is the winner of Best Music (Original Score) and Best Makeup at Academy Awards (2003) along with Best Original Score at Golden Globes (2003). Top IMDb rating, starring Salma Hayek as *Frida*, the relevant representation of graphics design and painting on screen and undoubtedly, the Oscar has set this film apart from the other films on Frida Kahlo.

Introduction of painter Frida Kahlo

To introduce the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, this section has obtained information from the websites of National Museum of Women in the Arts (New York), FridaKahlo.org and britishcouncil.org. Frida Kahlo (full name Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón) was born in Coyocan, near Mexico City, in 1907. Her mother's name was Matilde Calderón y González and her father, Guillermo Kahlo, was a German Mexican photographer. Kahlo was the third of four daughters, who did not originally plan to become a painter. At several stages of her life, she was bedridden for long periods of time due to various physical ailments. During her recovery, Frida started painting in oils, creating deliberately

naive self-portraits, still lives and she was deeply influenced by indigenous Mexican culture, which is apparent in her use of bright colors and dramatic symbolism.

In 1929, Frida married the much older famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, whose approach to art and political activism complemented her own. Unfortunately, theirs was a volatile relationship that underwent marital infidelities along with the pressures of Rivera's famous career, her miscarriage, their divorce, remarriage, and Kahlo's deteriorating health. Drawing on personal experiences, Frida Kahlo's works often are characterized by their stark portrayals of pain. Of her 143 paintings, 55 are self-portraits which often incorporate symbolic portrayals of physical and psychological wound (Foundation, 2017).

In 1938, Frida Kahlo had her first solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, another exhibition on Paris in 1939 invited by the French writer and poet Andre Breton (1896-1966) and enjoyed the beginning of her international success in the 1940s. The Louvre (The Louvre Museum - national art museum in Paris) bought her *The Frame*, displayed at the exhibition and it became the first work by a 20th century Mexican painter ever purchased by the internationally renowned museum (National Museum of Women in the Arts, n.d.).

Plot of the film Frida (2002)

Biopics of artists are always difficult to recreate, because the connections between life and art always seem too easy and facile while the best ones lead us back to the work itself and inspire us to sympathize with its maker (Ebert, 2002). The biopic directed by Julie Taymor chronicles the amazing life of Frida Kahlo.

Born to a German Jewish father and a Mexican mother, Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek) spent her teenage years in Mexico City, which at the time was a hub of exile and intrigue. Then, in a trolley crash that fractures her spine and punctures her body with a steel rod, she suffers injuries that are almost fatal. She would never experience pain-free living again, and she would frequently need to wear a body cast.

When Frida met Rivera (Alfred Molina), he was already a legendary figure, gained a lot of exposure and started getting large scale work orders. He has always had an excessive affinity with women and also has been caught cheating on his wives many times. However, such is Diego's influence over women that, after Frida and Diego's marriage, Lupe (his ex-wife) brought them breakfast in bed. Diego secured Rockefeller commission and they move to New York where Diego finds success and Frida had loneliness, miscarriage, and intimacy with women. For the

differences in political ideologies, Rockefeller commission was cancelled, Diego Rivera became frustrated and then the pair return to Mexico.

In Mexico, after an unsuccessful marriage, Cristina (Frida's sister) moves in with them as Diego Rivera's Studio assistant but caught up by Frida while sleeping with him. Despite accepting closeness with other women, Frida was unable to accept the situation with her sister. Leaving him, Frida moved back to her father's Coyocan home and subsequently sinks into alcoholism. Frida used her art to express her pain during this difficult period of depression.

Frida and Diego reunite during a Día de los Muertos celebration (Day of the Dead -Mexican Festival) where he asks her to welcome and house Leon Trotsky (famous Russian revolutionary, Soviet politician, and political theorist), who has been granted political asylum in Mexico. Gradually, Trotsky expresses his love for Kahlo's work, began an affair with her and also left her while his wife got to know about it. Meanwhile, Diego Rivera had never issued with Frida's bisexual nature but involvement with men (specially Leon Trotsky) make him jealous and asked for a divorce. In 1940, Trotsky got murdered in Mexico City, police suspected Diego and while failing to locate him, they arrested Frida. Cristina (her sister) released Frida Kahlo out of prison, explaining that Diego Rivera convinced President Cárdenas (Lázaro Cárdenas, a Mexican army officer, politician and served as Mexican president from 1934 to 1940) to release her. Frida's health worsens, leading to the amputation of a leg and bronchopneumonia, which leaves her bedridden again. Surprisingly, Diego Rivera realized and remorsefully asked Frida to remarry him. Gradually, Frida began to achieve her much desired success (especially Mexican attention) in painting and despite the health conditions, she attended her first solo Mexican exhibition in her bed which was carried from her home to the museum.

Literature Review

In this section we need to recall the previous literary works on film and painting analysis, the relationship between them and to compare the methods and theoretical frameworks they used. To analyze these all, most of the studies related to film and painting analysis have applied qualitative approaches and few tried quantitative approaches.

Through a quantitative lens, Jin (2022) focused on oil paintings and looked at the relationship between color and emotion, the emotional expression of color, and the expression of emotion in painting (pp.1-3). Another quantitative approach was done by Kim (2014) focusing on the three quantities in a painting – the usage of each color, variety of painted colors, and the roughness of the brightness of images. Kuang et al. (2023) introduces the relationship between Leonardo's golden angle

principle and the composition of Millet's figural paintings for revisiting artistic techniques of the past to express the limits of modernity (pp.1-2). Modernism in painting were discussed by Weststeijn just as Van Mander writes that mirrors display 'only the appearance of true essence, but not truth itself' (Weststeijn, 2023). Here comes the study of signs. In analysis of these signs in painting, Ma (2023) found its interconnection with poetry. Be it poetry or painting, Wango (2023) responded to the derivation of subject matter from themes by analyzing the three main perspectives - Subject, Form, and Content (pp.199-202). Before this, Joret (2019) shows Bazin's study on film and painting within a postwar endeavor to renew artistic forms and to revive their social implication (p.90). Bazin (as cited in Joret, 2017) states that painting functions as a counter-reference to film that have changed painting because they freed '[the visual arts] from the obsession of resemblance' (p.91). On the other hand, semiotic analysis is more used for film analysis.

Although literature is available separately on film and painting, there is hardly any literature available on the convergence of film and painting methodology. From this point of view, by fixing research objectives, this study aims to reconcile the two-art form.

Research Question/Objective

- Which of Frida Kahlo's paintings is prominent in the film *Frida* (2002)?
- How do those paintings by Frida Kahlo justify the relevant settings of the film *Frida* (2002)?

Methodology

The *qualitative* research approach was utilized, considering (the selected frames of) film and (selected) paintings as qualitative data (like other non-statistical data-text, video, audio, etc.). Additionally, *secondary sources* (Secondary data - existing newspaper reports, interviews, criticism, reviews, etc.) and from the qualitative research approaches- *Observation* (directly from films, i.e., researcher's own seeing, hearing, and experience from primary sources) have been used.

Theoretical Framework

To explore the RQs of this study, it will follow formal analysis for Frida Kahlo's paintings and semiotic analysis for the film *Frida* (2002)'s framings. Formal analysis is closely related to contextual analysis since the previous is fundamental. Also, the context of the painting shall extend to the descriptive circumstance in which each painting was done; very much like understanding the setting of its creation (Wango, 2023, p.203). Munsterberg as cited in Wango (2009) notes that,

“Formal analysis is a specific type of visual description. Unlike ekphrasis, it is not meant to evoke the work in the reader’s mind. Instead, it is an explanation of the visual structure, of the ways in which certain visual elements have been arranged and function within a composition” (p.204). Wangos (2023) the three main perspectives – Subject (determines what the ... artist had in mind and what he or she intended to portray or express and hence what their specific motivation was), Form (refers to the entire or overall organization of an artwork that forms the complete composition that describes the artwork including the purposeful use of the elements and quests ‘how’ the painting was created and the reasons why the artist may have made certain choices), and Content (refers to the emotional, philosophical, or intellectual message in the work of art, quests to understand ‘why’ the artist came up with the form, often buried deep into the thoughts of the artist and may be difficult to unravel unless one interview the artist) will assist the formal analysis of the paintings in this study.

Along with formal analysis to analyze painting, this study will also apply semiotic analysis for the relevant framings of *Frida* (2002). Semiotics itself is a study of signs and the way the sign works (Fiske, 1990). According to F. de Saussure, the sign has two entities namely *signifier* (physical part; or the tangible thing we see or hear or what we perceive) and *signified* (psychological part, the reaction to the object, the mental picture a signifier evokes, the internal response to the signifier) (Wantoro, 2018, p.399). Another theoretician, Roland Barthes noted semiotics works in two stages, namely in the first stage- *denotative* stage, speaking directly about the object, namely the signifier, signified and sign. The second stage- *connotative* stage, taking the whole sign system of the first stage. Also, when it comes to film signs, while following de Saussure’s division, Barthes describes it as a blend of film signifiers (decor, costume, landscape, music, gestures) and signified (concepts) (Vujovic, 2018).

Data collection

The first stage in this study was to collect data from the film *Frida* (2002) directed by Julie Taymor adapted from the book *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (1983) by Hayden Herrera. To collect it, the first approach should be observation or direct observation of the film *Frida* (2002) by watching it. In the process of observation or direct observation, researchers will record some important things (like several important scenes by capturing them) in the film. The next approach used is literature study. Literature study is the study of data collection using media such as books, articles, and scientific research on the design of visual communication, films, signs, and related research methodologies (Wantoro, 2018).

Data analysis

After data is collected, the next step is to process data by selecting, classifying, and preparing. At this stage, the writer will choose several scenes that represent the RQ1 and RQ2 marks in the film. Here this study will identify Frida Kahlo's paintings used in this film *Frida* (2002) and discuss the relevance of their placement in film narrative. The author will select relevant scenes from the film to analyze the context of the paintings in a semiotic approach (denotative and connotative meaning) while for painting, this study will use Wangos formal analysis from the three main perspectives – Subject, Form and Content.

Findings

The first objective of the research was to find the Frida Kahlo paintings that were significantly presented to the storyline of the film *Frida* (2002). After observing this film, a total of nineteen paintings were found in the film *Frida* (2002) - *Portrait Of Cristina, My Sister* (1828), *Self Portrait in A Velvet Dress* (1926), *Self Portrait Time Flies* (1929), *Portrait Of Lupe Marin* (1929), *Frieda And Diego Rivera* (1931), *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932), *My Dress Hangs There* (1933), *A Few Small Nips* (Passionately in Love) (1935), *My Nurse And I* (1937), *Four Inhabitants of Mexico* (1938), *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale* (1938), *Girl With Death Mask* (1938), *What The Water Gave Me* (1938), *The Two Fridas* (1939), *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940), *The Dream (The Bed)* (1940), *The Broken Column* (1944), *The Wounded Deer* (1946) and *Portrait of My Father* (1951).

The second objective of the research was to find if the Kahlo paintings justify the relevant settings of the film *Frida* (2002) or not. This study has found among nineteen, thirteen artworks in the film were in sync with the context of its painting.

To summarize, according to the findings of the data and on the basis of RQ1 and RQ2, this study can state the result in the following:

Table 1 Major and Minor appearance of paintings in the film

Type	Real-time appearance of painting	Imaginary appearance of painting	Conversational appearance of painting	Observational appearance of painting	Total Number of paintings
Major appearance of painting	8	3	1	0	12

	<i>Portrait of Christina, My Sister</i> (1928), <i>Self-portrait wearing a velvet dress</i> (1926), <i>Portrait of Lupe Marin</i> , 1929, <i>Henry Ford Hospital</i> , 1932, <i>Self Portrait with Cropped Hair</i> , 1940, <i>The Two Fridas</i> 1939, <i>The Broken Column</i> 1944, <i>My Nurse And I</i> , 1937	<i>Frieda and Diego Rivera</i> (1931), <i>My Dress Hangs There</i> , 1933, <i>The Dream</i> (The Bed) 1940	<i>A Few Small Nips</i> (Passionately in Love), 1935		
Minor appearance of painting	1	4	0	2	7
	<i>My Nurse And I</i> , 1937	<i>Girl With Death Mask</i> , 1938, <i>What The Water Gave Me</i> , 1938, <i>The Wounded Deer</i> 1946, <i>Portrait of My Father</i> , 1951,		<i>Four Inhabitants of Mexico</i> , 1938, <i>The Suicide of Dorothy Hale</i> , 1938	

To proceed with the discussion section, a brief analysis of those thirteen major paintings and its placement in film is needed.

Denotative meaning in the film and the paintings

As this study has found thirteen artworks in the film were in sync with the context of its painting, this section will analyze the denotative meaning of those paintings and its narrative placement in the film *Frida* (2002).

1. Portrait of Christina, My Sister (1928)

Here the subject is Cristina Kahlo (1908-1964), who was the younger sister of famous Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. The genre of this painting is portrait (visual representation of a person and can be created in any artistic medium) drawn in Naïve art style (raw creativity and instinctive approaches to materials, composition, and ideas) on newsprint medium. This painting appeared at 19m:07s on film *Frida* (2002). After the severe bus accident, with the support of Father Guillermo Kahlo and sister Christina, Frida continued her paintings, first lying in bed, then sitting in a wheelchair, and also started drawing her family members in her initial days.



Figure 1: Portrait of Christina, My Sister (1928)

2. Self-portrait wearing a velvet dress (1926)

This painting is one of Frida Kahlo's early portraits where she was wearing a wine-red velvet dress, raises her right hand, stares directly out of the canvas and looked like a princess in it. The genre of this painting is portrait drawn in Naïve art style on oil medium inspired from Mexican folk art (like bright colors, complicated patterns, cultural significance, ethnic variation, functionality, symbolism etc.) and Western art (like concentration on people, time, and culture), resulting in a striking

contrast between realism and naivety. In film, this painting appeared at 22m:57s in the context of Frida leaving this painting to Diego Rivera, the famous Mexican painter, for commenting on whether she would continue to paint.

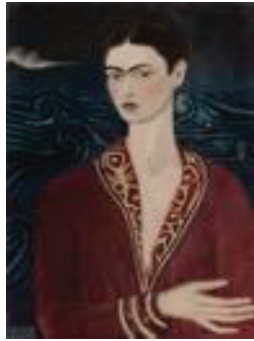


Figure 2: Self-portrait wearing a velvet dress (1926)

3. *Self Portrait Time Flies* (1929)

Frida Kahlo created this self-portrait in 1929, when she married Diego Rivera. The genre of this painting is portraiture that is drawn in Naïve art style on oil and Masonite medium. This painting appeared at 28minutes on screen while Diego and Frida were in their intimate moment and complementing each other's artwork.

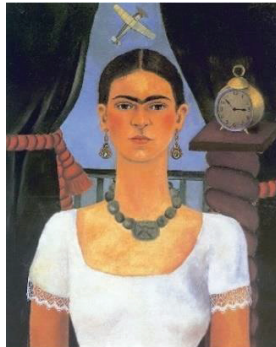


Figure 3: Self Portrait Time Flies (1929)

4. *Portrait of Lupe Marin* (1929)

This portrait depicts Lupe Marin (1895–1983) a Mexican model and novelist, who was the second wife of Diego Rivera. The genre of this painting is portraiture drawn in Naïve art style on oil medium. *Portrait of Lupe Marin, 1929*, the painting appeared at 47m:10s in the film, where Frida was painting it while thinking about Lupe.



Figure 4: Portrait of Lupe Marin (1929)

5. *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931)

Frida draws this painting, *Frieda and Diego Rivera*, 1931, as a wedding portrait after two years of their conjugal life at San Francisco in April 1931 (Harris & Zucker, 2015). The genre of this painting is portraits drawn in Naïve art style on oil medium. This painting appeared at 38m:49s on screen at the eve of the wedding sequence of *Frida* and *Diego*.



Figure 5: *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931)

6. *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932)

In this painting, Frida depicts herself in Henry Ford Hospital, lying on the bed naked with blood and hemorrhage with the phrase Henry Ford Hospital written on the side. The genre of this painting is canvas drawn in Naïve art style on oil in

metal medium. In the film, the painting, *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932, reflected at 1h:00m:56s on screen at Diego's hand after the miscarriage of his wife.



Figure 6: *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932)

7. *My Dress Hangs There* (1933)

My Dress Hangs There is a highly politicized critical portrait of the USA during the Depression (1929–1939) that resonates as much today as it did when she painted it in 1933. The genre of this painting is allegorically drawn in Naïve art style on oil medium. The appearance of this painting *My Dress Hangs There*, 1933 is seen at 1h:08m:51s. In film, after an argument with Diego in New York, Frida stares blankly out of the window and sees her Mexican dress hanging alone on a rope in an imaginary scene.



Figure 7: *My Dress Hangs There* (1933)

8. *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940)

Right after Frida Kahlo divorced her husband Diego Rivera, she painted this *Self-portrait with cropped hair* in 1940. The genre of this painting is a self-portrait in Naïve art style on oil medium. This painting appeared at 01h:15m:33s on screen after the separation of the couple.

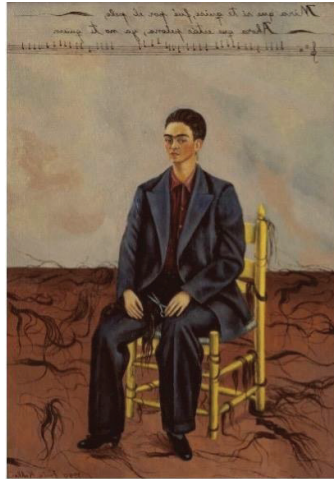


Figure 8: Self Portrait with Cropper Hair (1940)

9. *A Few Small Nips (Passionately in Love)* (1935)

Kahlo's famous work, *A Few Small Nips*, depicts her naked and bloodied body which reflects her physical and psychological pain of conjugal life onto another woman's cataclysm (Polat, 2023). The genre of this painting is a self-portrait in Naïve art style on oil medium. Frida and Lupe (ex-second wife of Diego) are seen talking about the painting *A Few Small Nips (Passionately in Love)*, 1935 during a conversation which appeared at 01h:16m:26s on screen.

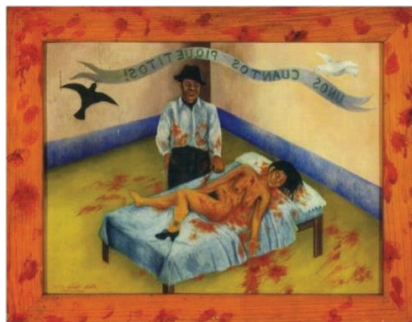


Figure 9: A Few Small Nips (Passionately in Love) (1935)

10. The Two Fridas (1939)

After divorcing Diego Rivera, Frida created *The Two Fridas* (1939) as a means of expressing her dual identity and feelings. The genre of this painting is a self-portrait allegorically drawn in Naïve art style on oil medium. The painting *The Two Fridas* 1939 appeared at 01h:39m:36s on screen.



Figure 10: The Two Fridas (1939)

11. The Broken Column (1944)

In this painting, *The Broken Column*, Frida expressed her anguish and suffering in the most straightforward and horrifying way. The genre of this painting is a self-portrait allegorically drawn in Naïve art style on oil and Masonite medium. The painting *The Broken Column* 1944 is seen at 01h:42m:05s on screen where Frida with her broken column is painting her artwork *The Broken Column* 1944.

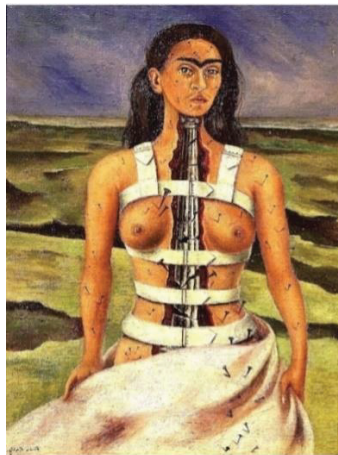


Figure 11: The Broken Column (1944)

12. *My Nurse And I* (1937)

This painting depicts Frida is being nursed by her native Indian wet-nurse. The genre of this painting is a self-portrait allegorically drawn in Naïve art style on oil in metal medium. *My Nurse And I*, 1937 the painting is seen at 01h:45m:21s on screen where she was seen drawing this painting when she was sick in bed.



Figure 12: *My Nurse and I* (1937)

13. *The Dream (The Bed)* (1940)

In *The Dream (The Bed)*, painted in the year of 1940, Frida expressed her feeling and interception of death which depicts her lying in bed, asleep and surrounded by a variety of objects and images. The genre of this painting is a self-portrait allegorically drawn in Naïve art style on oil in metal medium. The painting *The Dream (The Bed)* appears at 01h: 55m: 51s on screen, almost at the end of the film.



Figure13: *The Dream (The Bed)* (1940)

Connotative meaning in the film and the paintings

As this study has found thirteen artworks in the film were in sync with the context of its painting, this section will analyze the connotative meaning of those paintings and its cinematic placement in the film *Frida* (2002).

Frida expressed her emotional state by *Portrait of Christina, My Sister* (1928) for her beloved sister in Renaissance's style (like linear perspective, realism, humanism, non-religious, private and nature etc.) in her bedridden days.

Table 2 Portrait of Christina, My Sister's (1928) cinematic placement in film.



Figure 1: Fridas metaphorical entry in painting world



Figure 2: Establishing shot of painting Christinas portrait

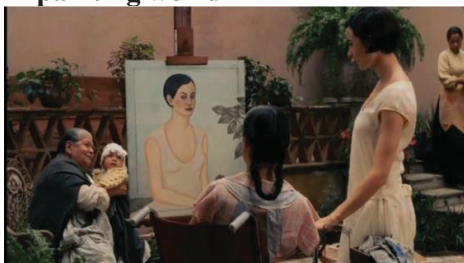


Figure 3: During painting with Christina as model

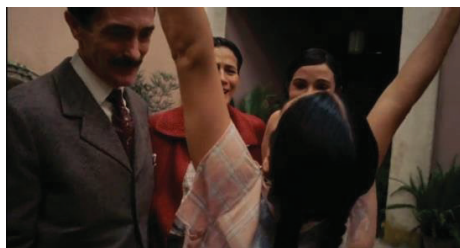


Figure 4: Frida can walk now.

The sequence begins with a high angle establishing shot (opening frame of a scene that establishes the scene's general environment) of a family atmosphere. After completing this painting, the whole family praised her a lot, she surprised everyone by standing up from the wheelchair and raising both hands like a winner which was quite metaphorical as the mural she saw in Church. The positioning of the painting in the film and the context of the painting are coordinated and the connotation of "A new artist is born town!" is clearly portrayed.

It is believed that Frida created the painting *Self-portrait wearing a velvet dress* (1926) for her then-boyfriend Alejandro Gomez Arias, who had broken up with her, following her traumatic bus accident in 1925 (Stockwell, 2019). By

concentrating on her art, Frida overcame the anguish of a failed relationship with her high school sweetheart and emerged stronger to win back love and aim in life. In the thought of “can painting be her career?”, in film, the sequence begins with a sudden meeting between Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

Table 2 Self-portrait wearing a velvet dress’s (1926) cinematic placement in film.



Figure 5: Frida (high angle) in front of famous Diego



Figure 6: Diego (low angle) was astonished when Frida asked him to come down and observe her painting



Figure 7: First time Diego was impressed by Fridas painting

In the light of the composition of the frame (fig. 9), it can be said that Frida, the apprentice of the painting world who is at the feet of the famous painter Diego, will one day surpass Diego? Or will his own style of painting be lost in Diego's shadow? Since both paintings were created while Frida was confined to bed following a bus accident, a close representation of this on screen can be referred to as sync.

The painting *Time Flies* reflects Diego Rivera's influence on Frida's art after marriage. This influence visually transferred into intimacy in film through his “I could never paint like this”. The placement of this artwork among their intimate scenes in a wide shot represents the blending of art and love between them. So, the positioning of the painting in the film and the context of the painting are coordinated.



Figure 8: Diego was amazed at Fridas painting skill.

When Frida and Diego got married in 1929, Frida and Lupe Marin(ex-wife) became friends, Lupe taught her to make Diego's favorite dishes, went shopping and in return Frida painted this portrait for her to show her gratitude and friendship (Kahlo.org, n.d.). In the film, the appearance of this painting has a connection with its pervious sequence. After being married to Diego, Frida discovers Lupe (ex-wife of Diego) residing upstairs and delivering food for them. She then gets into a fight, but they end up being friends . In rekindling their friendship, they are both depicted at eye level (the cinematographer positions the camera angle directly at the eye level of the character), while quarreling Frida was seen from a high angle shot (where the camera looks down on the character or subject from an elevated perspective). Dramatically, this scene ended when the caretaker addresses Mrs. Rivera and both Frida and Lupe responded "yes" at the same time. An uncertain unity has been established between them through this dialogue.

Table 3 Portrait of Lupe Marin, 1929s cinematic placement in film.



Figure 9: Frida and Lupe fight



Figure 10: Frida and Lupe became friends.



Figure 11: the caretaker addresses Mrs. Rivera!



Figure 12: Frida and Lupe replied "yes"

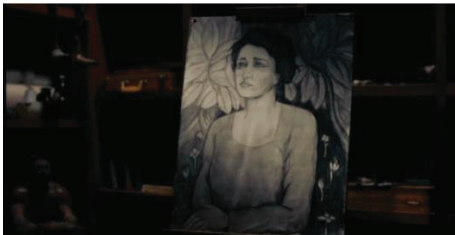


Figure 13: Frida painting the Portrait of Lupe Marin, 1929

The connotation of a beautiful portrayal of the common pain, joy, and fear of two women in this patriarchal society was clearly depicted. So, the positioning of the painting *Portrait of Lupe Marin, 1929* in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are coordinated.

Frieda and Diego Rivera (1931) is the portrayal of the self-realization that, after two years of marriage Frida did not have that respect of a wife, did not flourish her painting skills, and remained just a companion next to his famous husband. The connotation of the self-realization of the homemaker of a famous figure is portrayed clearly. In the film, with the help of special effects, the story goes directly from this painting to the wedding scene of Frida and Diego. Contextually this painting was created after two years of their marriage, while in film it appeared during their marriage. So, the positioning of the painting in the film and the context of the painting are not coordinated.

Henry Ford Hospital, 1932 reflects what Frida felt when she was having a miscarriage at Henry Ford Hospital. Her discomforts showed with the way she painted her body: from the waist up, she turns toward the viewer; from the waist down, she turns away. This artwork features a snail, male fetus, female reproductive organs, and a metallic object resembling a machine. The snail symbolizes her miscarrying time, while the left side reveals her skeletal issues.

The machine's appearance raises questions about the body's ability to be repaired, and the right side features a purple orchid.

Table 4 Henry Ford Hospital, 1932s cinematic placement in film.



Figure 14: Fridas Miscarriage



Figure 15: Expressed her pain through painting.



Figure 16: Henry Ford Hospital, 1932 in Diego's hand

The inscription in *Henry Ford Hospital, 1932* not only provides accurate details about the miscarriage incident but also identifies Kahlo as a painter (on screen it appeared as Diego Rivera's point of view) and a helpless wife of the great Rivera's. This point-of-view shot of Diego in film also reflects Diegos realization that Frida is a great artist than him. Kahlo's physical and emotional suffering, as well as her resiliency and creativity, are all vividly depicted in the artwork. So, the positioning of the painting *Henry Ford Hospital, 1932* in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are in sync.

My Dress Hangs There, 1933 portrays Frida's feelings on the border crossing between Mexico and the United States. Frida's art critiques American obsessions with efficiency, sports, and business, using symbols like a monumental toilet and a golden golf trophy. She also explores the eclecticism of American taste, transforming the crucifix into a dollar sign and linking the church's gothic tower to a Wall Street temple. Among these all, she missed her homeland through her traditional Mexican dress which are left hanging there alone in the American mess (McCormik, 2016).

Table 5 My Dress Hangs There, 1933s cinematic placement in film.

Figure 17: The Fall of Diego from New York- a symbolical imagination of Frida while bathing



Figure 18: A painting of Traditional Mexican Plant stabbed by Diego as he wasn't eager to go back Mexico



Figure 19: But Frida was badly missing her Mexico_ My Dress Hangs There, 1933

In the film several montage sequences were screened to portray these situations. In 1930-1934, after leaving the Mexican Communist Party over ideological differences regarding artistic freedom, Diego achieved the heights of success, notoriety, financial security, and female company in New York, on the contrary, Frida's life was marred by the deaths of her child, her husband's alienation from her, and same-gender relationships. Both of their lives are portrayed through parallel cut (the main action is cut together with two or more different sets of action) on screen. Due to Diego's socialist ideals his New York commission was terminated. He was frustrated, wanted to protest from New York while Frida was desperate to get back to her own Mexico. The connotation of Frida's patriotism towards her homeland, Mexico, is expressed figuratively through her Mexican dress. So, the positioning of the painting *My Dress Hangs There*, 1933 in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are coordinated.



Figure 33: Frida painted herself after separation from Diego.

Following her separation with Diego, Frida decides to shed her feminine persona (hair and Tehuana dress which was Diego fond of) excepts her earrings and began dressing in men's suits. The connotation of passion for self-realization and the process of turning grief into strength is portrayed clearly. So, the positioning of the painting *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940 in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are coordinated.

Frida found a news story on stabbing fiancée to death to be both horrifying and fascinating as her own married life was not going very well due to her sister and husband's affair and so she, converted it to a painting. She used pigeons as allegorical form in it where the title of the painting is a pennant hoisted by adoration pigeons. One bird is white, the other is dark, suggesting perhaps the bright and dark sides of affection.

The connotation of how husband's infidelity with her sister and own physical disability have constantly killed Frida leaving her in a stabbing state of disrepute is clearly portrayed. The pose of the reclining woman depicted in *A Few Small Nips* is similar to that Frida in *Henry Ford Hospital*. So, the positioning of the painting in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are coordinated.



Figure 34: Frida was talking about this painting with Lupe



Figure 35: Frida completed two Frida

The painting, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, expressed Frida's inner struggle where the left Frida dressed in Mexican traditional Tehuana while the right-sided Frida is dressed in a European-style dress. Also, the two Fridas are holding hands. The broken heart symbolizes Frida's sorrow and loneliness after her divorce, while the intact heart represents her devotion and attachment to Diego. The painting shows Frida's struggle with her emotions and sense of self between life and death, her Native American and European heritage, her love for and hatred of Diego, her desire to be a mother and her sterility.

So, in the film, *The Two Fridas* 1939 appeared on screen after many events like - her husband's infidelity with her sister, the death of Frida's mother Matilda Kahlo (1899–1951), Frida's love affair with the Russian revolutionary-politician-theorist Leon Trotsky, Diego's jealousy on Leon Trotsky, Frida's success at the Breton Exhibition in Paris and Leon Trotsky's death at the hands of an assassin. All these narratives were portrayed through a montage sequence (a series of short shots are sequenced to condense space, time, and information.). The director has utilized the power of film as well as compressed time and space through many events in one

montage shot. So, the positioning of the painting in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are in sync.



Figure 20: Frida's spine treatment



Figure 21: Frida painting The Broken Column 1944

Thus, the idea of overcoming obstacles with confidence is conveyed quite effectively. So, the positioning of the painting in the film *Frida* (2002) and its context are coordinated. It would have been nice for the director to have a few shots on film showing how the decay started in his spine.

In *My Nurse And I*, 1937 Frida is portraying pain from her pain. According to the private website www.FridaKahlo.org, Frida's own mother cannot breastfeed her since her younger sister Cristina was only 11 months younger than her. Her family hired a nurse to breastfeed her. The relationship between Frida and the nurse seems cold and distant as there are no cuddles or embracing. The nurse is just doing a practical process of breastfeeding. In her last days, after getting the desired attention from her husband and care from sister, Frida may have missed her dead mother during this illness. So, she painted this to express her motherly lacking's in life. *My Nurse And I*, 1937 was painted prior to *The Broken Column* 1944 while, *My Nurse And I*, 1937 appears in the film after *The Broken Column* 1944. That native Indian wet-nurse was also not that much visible in the whole film. Still, Frida represents herself as a baby who is both young and old, local to and foreign to, both living and dead in this artwork. So, the positioning of the painting in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting may not be coordinated but still linked through a strong emotional connection represented by the director Julie Taymor.



Figure 38: Frida is painting *My Nurse and I* (1937)

Death is not a new phenomenon for Frida Kahlo, where she has died every time physically due to the crucial bus accident, severe gangrene, brittle spine and mentally when her husband had extra-marital affairs, her sister did betrayal and she gave birth to a dead child. In the artwork, Frida is depicted sleeping in a bed that resembles a four-poster bed with a vine growing up her body like an unsteady string of life. Additionally, an awakened skeleton lays on the top of sleeping Frida that portrays the inevitable fact of death. The skeleton is also wired with explosives that can go off and explode at any time. The Mexican paper mâché skeleton, symbolizes Judas and the act of destroying negative energies during Easter. At the last act of the film, though bedridden Frida's condition deteriorates due to the amputation of a leg and bronchopneumonia, she attended her long awaited Mexican first solo exhibition in her bed.



Figure 39: *The Dream or the Bed* in 1940

The connotation of metaphorical celebration of a dreamlike and mysterious depiction of life, sleep, dream, and death in a strong surrealist undertone is presented, where, despite the lateness of the devotion of her husband or appreciation of her artistic talent, Frida still wants to pass away in peace. So, Frida painted this artwork in 1940, traveled to her first Mexican exhibition in 1953 on a similar cot, and died in 1954. The positioning of the painting in the film *Frida* (2002) and the context of the painting are coordinated.

Discussion

This discussion can be forward on three points - painting vs film, painter vs director and the convergence of art. In compared to film and painting, film is more communicative and has the feature of “something more”. Film is able to compress space and time where painting is closed to its one rectangular frame. Frida Kahlo’s paintings were way ahead of her time and had that film-like features which make them more appealing in her period. Fridas painting were based on the crucial events of her life while by combining it all will create a film of herself. Who knows if film could be made in a bedridden situation, Frida would definitely explore this artform.

Though all the paintings were major in Frida Kahlo’s life, in film their placement were decided by Julie Taymor. As it is stated that, among nineteen paintings seen in the film, thirteen artworks had major appearance in the film *Frida* (2002) and also were in sync with the context of its painting. The rest six paintings (*Girl with Death Mask*, 1938, *What The Water Gave Me*, 1938, *The Wounded Deer* 1946, *Portrait of My Father*, 1951, *Four Inhabitants of Mexico*, 1938, *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, 1938) has minorly appeared in the film. All these six paintings were definitely major in Fridas life, but they were considered minor in Taylors film. Still, they existed in film through Imaginary appearance (*Girl with Death Mask*, 1938, *What The Water Gave Me*, 1938, *The Wounded Deer* 1946, *Portrait of My Father*, 1951), Conversational appearance (*A Few Small Nips (Passionately in Love)*, 1935) and Observational appearance (*Four Inhabitants of Mexico*, 1938, *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, 1938). That’s the power of film to expand the meaning of painting. The set of wedding sequence were inspired by the painting *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931), the hair style in after-separation-depression sequence were inspired by *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940, the sequence of medical treatment on spine were inspired by *The Broken Column* 1944 and many more. Taylor did not directly portray the painting context of *Four Inhabitants of Mexico*, 1938 and *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, 1938; but these paintings were noticed by Leon Trotsky’s point of view in the film. Two montage sequences created with *The Broken Column*, 1944 and a collage of *Girl with Death Mask*, 1938, *What The Water Gave Me*, 1938, *The Wounded Deer* 1946 and *Portrait of My Father*, 1951. So, this convergence of both artform were pretty experimented well in the film *Frida* (2002) where Fridas painting, and Taylors framing were complementing each other to create a new artform.

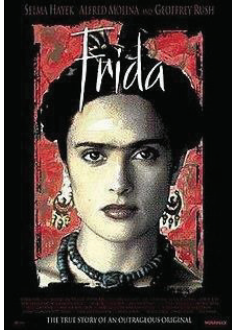
Conclusion

The fusion of painting and film is a complicated and dynamic phenomenon. There are significant differences between the two art styles even though there are numerous parallels. Filmmakers can use artworks as inspiration for their mise-en-scene, lighting, and composition, for instance. Similar to how filmmakers employ techniques like montage and editing to produce fresh, original works of art,

painters may do the same. It will be always interesting to see how the two creative genres continue to impact one another as they develop.

This study has found Frida Kahlo's paintings complemented the film *Frida* (2002) by influencing its mise-en-scene, featuring bright colors, bold patterns, and religious symbolism. The film's flashbacks and dream sequences showcased the director's skill in portraying Frida Kahlo's memories which created an immersive way of experiencing both artform for viewers. The paintings served as a framing device, ensuring continuity between scenes, and showcasing Kahlo's life and work in the film. So, this study suggests that films based on the painters' biographies can be a great tool to study this convergence of two art form as a new genre.

At a glance

<i>Frida</i> (2002)	
	
Figure 22: Promotional poster	
Directed by	Julie Taymor
Screenplay by	Clancy Sigal, Diane Lake, Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas
Based on	<i>Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo</i> by Hayden Herrera
Produced by	Sarah Green, Salma Hayek, Jay Polstein, Lizz Speed, Nancy Hardin, Lindsay Flickinger, Roberto Sneider
Starring	Salma Hayek, Alfred Molina, Geoffrey Rush, Valeria Golino, Mía Maestro, Roger Rees, Antonio Banderas, Edward Norton
Cinematography	Rodrigo Prieto
Edited by	Françoise Bonnot
Music by	Elliot Goldenthal
Production companies	Ventanarosa, Lions Gate Films
Distributed by	Miramax Films
Release dates	August 29, 2002 (Venice), October 25, 2002 (United States)
Running time	123 minutes
Language	English

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