

Frida Kahlo

The Artist in the Blue House

 PRESTEL

What a proud looking woman!

But she also seems a bit serious, with her hair pulled up and wound into a turban. Even her eyebrows, which meet in the middle, make her appear rather stern. But look more closely ... those same eyebrows resemble a bird in flight! In fact, birds are everywhere in this picture. Two brightly-colored parrots are perching happily on the woman's shoulders and two more are sitting in her lap.

Who could this woman be?
Where does she come from?
Who painted her?

The woman in the picture painted her own portrait.

Her name is **Frida Kahlo** and she lived in Mexico.

Me and My Parrots, 1941





**In her paintings,
the artist tells
the story of her life.**



**Guillermo Kahlo and Matilde Calderón on their
wedding day, photograph, 1898**



Frida Kahlo aged 5 (front left) with her sisters and other relatives, 1912

The photo above shows Frida with other members of her family taken in her parents' garden when she was a little girl.

In the painting opposite, the red ribbon in her hand leads to her grandparents. Frida's mother's parents (top left) were Mexican and her father's parents (top right) came from Europe. They look very different, don't they? In the middle of the picture, Frida painted her parents on their wedding day. Little Frida is already in her mother's womb.

My Grandparents, My Parents, and I, 1936



Accident, 1926

When Frida was eighteen years old, she was in a terrible accident. The bus she was traveling on ran into a streetcar, and Frida was badly injured. In this pencil sketch she made a year later, the crash can be clearly seen. Frida is lying on a stretcher, all bound up in bandages.

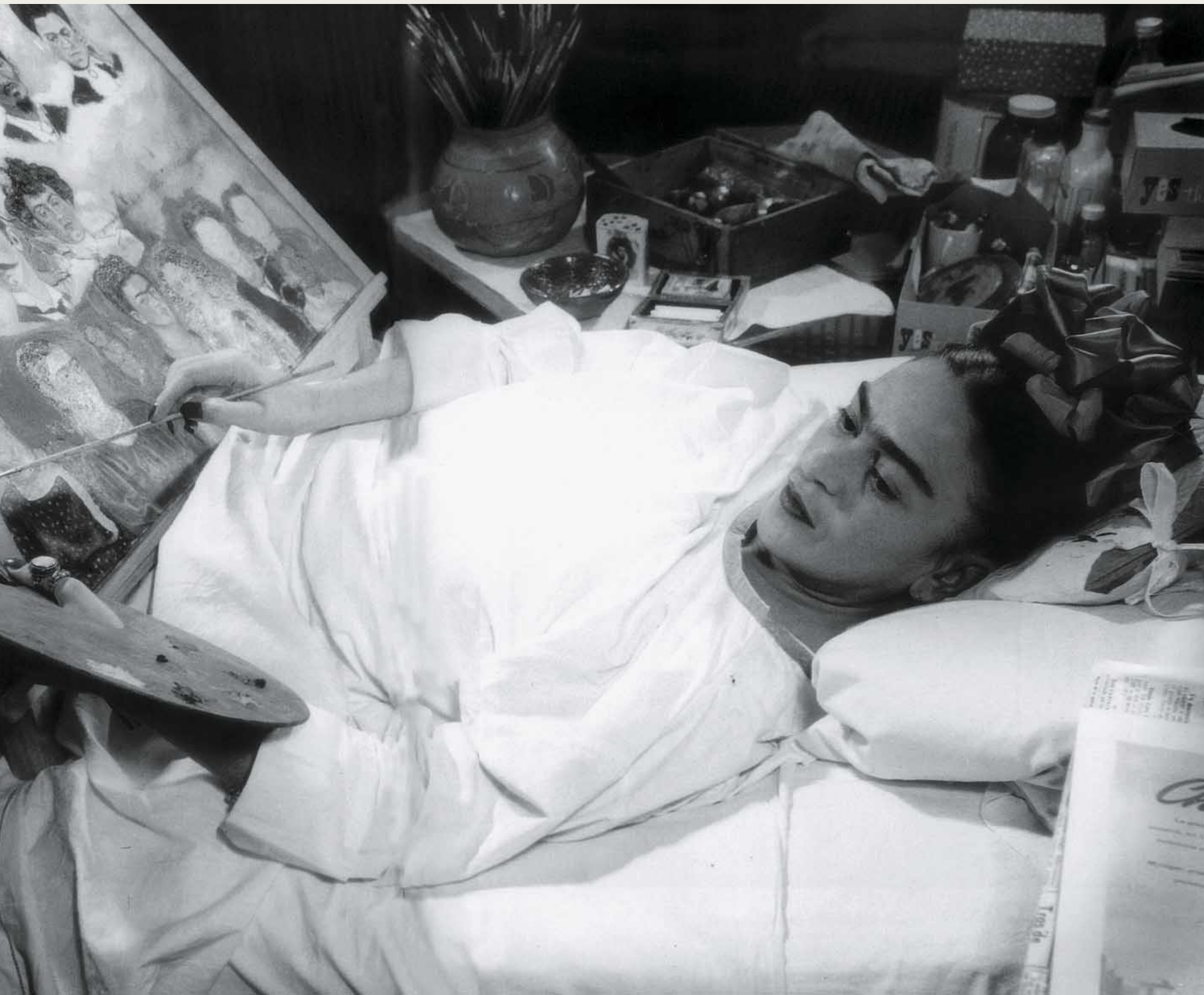
The accident completely changed her life, forcing her to spend months in bed. It was during that time that she started painting to help deal with the pain and the boredom. Even years later, Frida often had to paint lying down in bed because she was too ill to sit up.

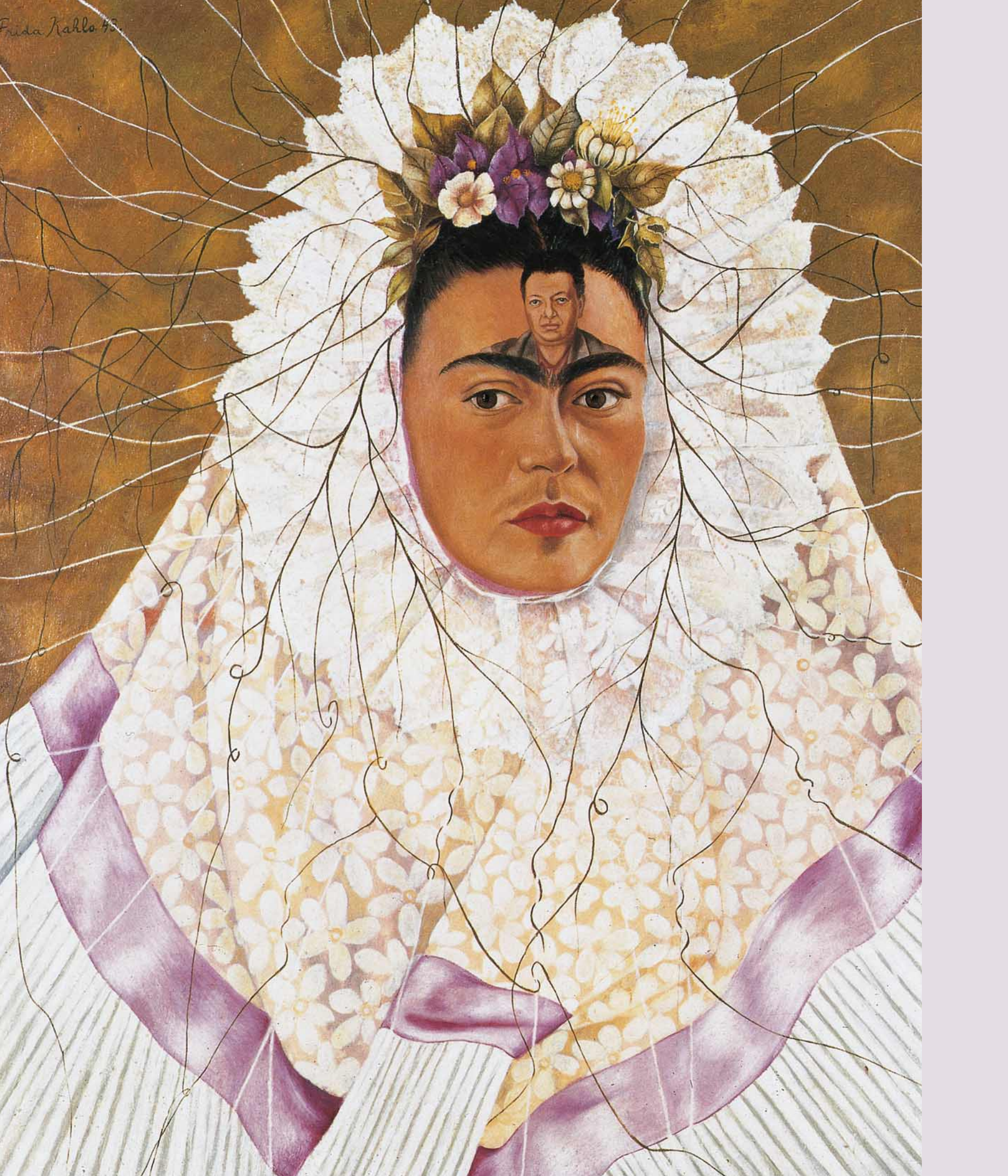
Can you see who the people are in this painting?

They are the artist's parents and grandparents.



Frida Kahlo painting in bed, 1952





Frida Kahlo 43

In this picture Frida looks like an exotic princess. She is wearing the traditional costume of the Tehuana, a proud and confident people who lived in Mexico for many centuries. Frida always liked to dress up. As a young girl she often wore men's suits, and when she was older she dressed like a Tehuana woman. Lace frames her beautiful but serious face; and on her forehead, directly above her curved eyebrows, is the face of a man.



Frida in the traditional costume of a Tehuana woman in front of her collection of ethnic Mexican ceramic ware, 1942

His name is **Diego Rivera** and he was also a famous Mexican painter.

But why did Frida paint him as if he were inside her own head?

Self Portrait as Tehuana Woman, 1943



Frida and Diego, 1928

Frida and Diego, 1930

Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo met because Frida wanted to show the well-known artist her paintings and find out what he thought of them. Diego felt that she was a very talented painter.

Frida and Diego soon fell in love and married—in fact, Frida painted this picture (opposite) from a wedding photo.

She seems so small and delicate next to such a big man, and her tiny feet hardly seem to touch the ground.

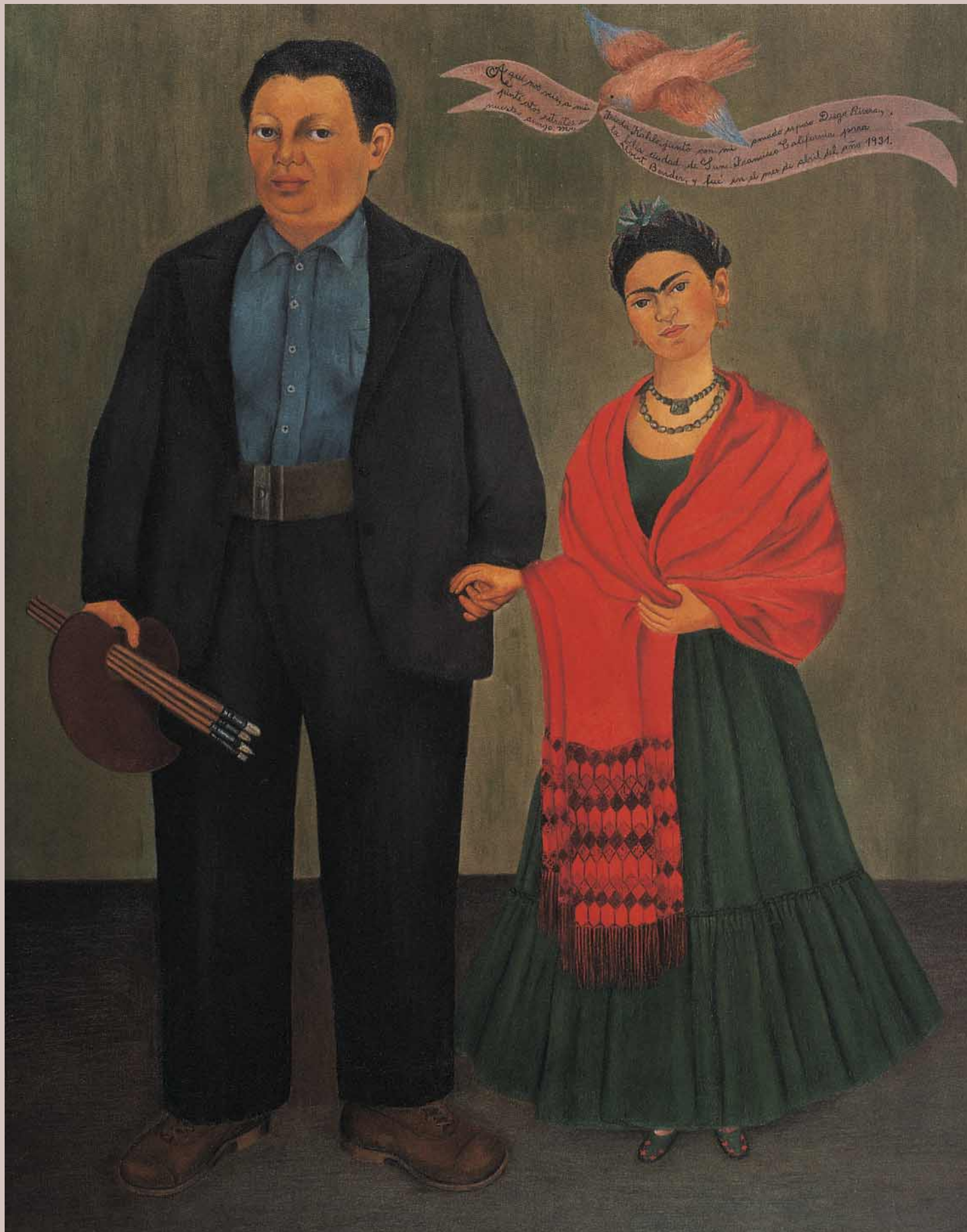


Looking at this painting, it is easy to understand why the couple were sometimes called

the dove and the elephant!

Frida admired Diego both as a person and an artist, as this picture of Diego holding an artist's seems to show. He was the great love of her life and can be seen in many of her paintings.

Frida and Diego Rivera, 1931



*Aquel nos casamos
quince años atrás en
nuestro casero. Hoy
vamos a verlo junto con mi
hermana en la ciudad de San Francisco
California para la
Exposición Baudin y aquí en el mes de abril del año 1931.*





There is so much to discover in this picture . . .

... skyscrapers and factories, old buildings, a temple and a church, an overflowing bin, a telephone, a beautiful woman, a burning house, and a crowd of people. Can you tell where this is? Right in the background, on the horizon, you can see the Statue of Liberty, which is in New York. When she painted this picture, Frida was no longer in Mexico but had gone north with Diego to live in the United States. It shows how she saw the United States and how homesick she was during her stay there.

This picture was made using a technique known as “collage.” Frida took lots of little pictures and joined them together—like puzzle pieces—to make one big picture. Some of the pieces are painted, whereas others have been cut out and pasted in.

My Dress is Hanging There, 1933