

Press Release



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ArtScience Museum presents two exhibitions focused on iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo

*Part of the season *Frida Forever*, the shows chronicle the artist's incredible life and legacy*



L to R: Entrance to Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon; gallery view of Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World

SINGAPORE (2 May 2024) – Two fascinating exhibitions celebrating the vibrant and extraordinary Mexican artist and cultural icon Frida Kahlo are set to open at ArtScience Museum as part of a season titled *Frida Forever*, from 4 May to 1 September.

Known as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, Frida Kahlo defied social norms throughout her life, exploring themes of identity, gender, and politics with raw honesty and intensity.

The *Frida Forever* season continues ArtScience Museum's 'Year of Extraordinary Women' – a year-long celebration of the stories of women who have challenged narratives, defied expectations, and transcended conventions. The exhibitions and programmes in *Frida Forever* take a distinctive approach by focusing on the biographical story of Frida Kahlo. Through immersive displays, historical artefacts, film screenings, symposia and workshops, the season provides a deeper understanding of Frida Kahlo not just as an artist but as an individual whose life experiences deeply influenced her creative process.

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The season features the Southeast Asian premiere of ***Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon***, developed by Layers of Reality and Frida Kahlo Corporation, alongside the world premiere of ***Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World***, which is curated by ArtScience Museum in collaboration with Frida Kahlo's great-niece Cristina Kahlo Alcalá and renowned curator, Circe Henestrosa. Together, these two exhibitions offer visitors a comprehensive look at Kahlo's remarkable journey beyond the canvas.

Despite a life marked by physical suffering which began with polio in her childhood and later a severe accident that caused lifelong complications, Kahlo channeled her experiences into her art. At the heart of *Frida Forever*, the exhibitions explore the interplay between Kahlo's medical challenges, her exuberant embrace of Mexican culture, her revolutionary zeal, and the passions that defined her life. The season also includes a virtual reality (VR) experience that offers fresh perspectives on Kahlo's artistic imagination, as well as a newly commissioned installation by Mexican artist and curator, Lidia Riveros, that celebrates Kahlo's cultural heritage and the motifs in her art.

"As part of our 'Year of Extraordinary Women', ArtScience Museum is thrilled to launch *Frida Forever*, a new season about the life of the iconic artist Frida Kahlo. Frida is one of the most well-known artists of the modern era, but beyond her exceptional body of work, the trials and tribulations of her life projected her into the position of a cultural and feminist icon. Within this season, we are taking an unusual approach to exploring Frida's story, focusing on the intersection of art and medicine. Frida was able to draw on vast reservoirs of strength and resilience to transform her medical conditions into artworks of verve and vigour, and passion and poetry. Her art emerged not in spite of her physical challenges, but because of them. Her portrayal of her own body, laid bare and damaged, transcends personal suffering and speaks to the ability of art to serve as a vehicle for healing and self-discovery. Frida's story draws attention to the often invisible experiences of those living with disabilities and is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit," said Honor Harger, Vice-President of ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands.

"*Frida Forever* is for anyone who feels different, for those who embrace themselves in any circumstances, and maintain a love of life in spite of adversity. With this season, we hope to foster tender moments of connectedness and find that little bit of Frida that exists in each one of us," she added.

"I am so excited to see Frida Kahlo's legacy come to life in this wonderful *Frida Forever* season at ArtScience Museum in Singapore. I have no doubt that the exhibitions will bring audiences closer to the life of an extraordinary woman and incredible artist. It has been a great delight to work with the curatorial teams involved," said Circe Henestrosa, curatorial advisor for *Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World*.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for more details on Frida Kahlo.

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Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon

Making its Southeast Asian premiere at ArtScience Museum, *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* is an immersive biographical exhibition that charts the life and work of the artist, journeying through her most pivotal moments from childhood to her physical and emotional struggles, to the life-changing accident that shaped her into an artist with a powerful and unyielding spirit of resilience.

Produced by Layers of Reality and Frida Kahlo Corporation, the exhibition encompasses eight thematic spaces featuring photographs, films, multi-layered technology, interactive installations, 360-degree projections and interactive spaces that bring Kahlo's story to life. It gives visitors a deeper understanding of Kahlo's creativity and how she lost so much, yet still managed to love and live.



Visitors can pay tribute to Frida Kahlo at The Altar, where her image presides surrounded by a flower arch that represents the gateway between the world of the living and the dead

At the start of the exhibition is *The Altar*, a tribute to Kahlo adorned with water, candles, flowers, and items representing her life. It embodies *Día de los Muertos* – or the Day of the Dead – a Mexican festival where the living celebrate their brief reunion with the souls of deceased loved ones.



L to R: The Instant was created with a new multilayer projection format that mimics a three-dimensional holographic video; The visual textures and colours in The Dream were developed through an artificial intelligence algorithm that took inspiration from Frida's body of work

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The exhibition continues with stories of Kahlo's childhood, including her plans to enter the medical profession which were derailed by a catastrophic accident when she was 18 years old. On 17 September 1925, Kahlo was riding a bus when it crashed into a trolley car. She was badly wounded, sustaining a broken spine, collar bone, ribs, pelvis, 11 fractures in her leg, and a punctured midsection. From that point on, Kahlo endured long periods of recovery in her bed, and had to wear medical corsets for the rest of her life. The exhibition memorialises the accident through a haunting installation called *The Instant* that freezes that tragic moment in time, revealing Kahlo's physical and emotional fragility. *The Instant* uses multi-layer technology and a new approach to holographic video by overlapping layers of projection to give them a three-dimensional effect.

While the near-fatal accident broke Kahlo's body, it also became the catalyst for her love of painting. As she recovered from her injuries, she began painting and used art as a way of coping with pain and anguish. Her long convalescence is explored in an installation called *The Dream* by visual artist Jordi Massó and IDEAL. It transports visitors to Kahlo's bed – the place where she painted a significant number of her works after her accident – and depicts the continuous cycle of life.



The Garden of Love features a special participation programme where visitors help decorate the floral garden

Additionally, the exhibition examines Kahlo's three great passions: painting, political activism, and love. It details her many relationships, including the love of her life, Diego Rivera, whom she married in 1929. While Kahlo's accident meant that she could not bear children, she directed her love for children into her nieces and nephews, and channeled her affection into taking care of her garden and many animal companions. This story is told in a new themed space developed by ArtScience Museum called *The Garden of Love* that pays homage to Kahlo's beloved garden at her home, the Blue House in Mexico. Here, visitors can experience a Mexican-inspired garden filled with images of Kahlo with her plants and animals. Visitors can play a role in tending the garden, decorating it with flowers and contributing their own wishes of love.

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Recognisable symbols often seen in Frida's work include monkeys, skulls, flowers, sharp objects, animals and fruit

The artistic motifs that frequently appear in Kahlo's art are explored in the interactive installation, *Endless Symbolology*. It invites visitors to interact with symbols from Kahlo's paintings including flowers, fruit, a hummingbird, and a monkey, which visually represent themes in her life such as her Mexican culture, her marriage, fertility, pain, and death.



This section of the exhibition is decorated with brightly coloured murals, taking inspiration from a real tavern in Mexico where the walls were painted by Frida's students in her signature colour palette

At the centre of the exhibition is *La Rosita*, an interactive space that embodies Kahlo's vibrant and exuberant nature. It refers to the tavern, Pulquería La Rosita in Mexico, where Kahlo and her students created murals while she was an art teacher. Within this tavern, visitors of all ages are invited to become artists themselves, personalising their own portraits of Kahlo and projecting them onto the walls of the space.



One of the scenes featured in the Immersive Biography space

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One of the undeniable highlights of the show is the dramatic technicolour gallery featuring Frida Kahlo's *Immersive Biography*. This 30-minute, 360-degree experience traverses the life of Kahlo from her childhood to her final days, offering visitors the opportunity to experience her life story, passions, joy and sadness through photographs, films, animation and poetry.



Fashion Icon features dresses made by Tehuantepec women inspired by the artist's wardrobe, on loan from the Frida Kahlo Corporation. Frida's unique style has influenced fashion houses such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Valentino, Givenchy and Dior

The final part of the exhibition, *Fashion Icon*, focuses on how Kahlo used fashion and traditional clothing to show pride in her Mexican roots, as well as to conceal her injuries. Kahlo adorned her hair with flowers and wore long skirts to cover up her wounded body, including her shorter right leg – a result of her childhood polio. Her style was so distinctive that she became a fashion icon, appearing on the cover of *Vogue* in 1937. Her unique approach to fashion is explored in this section through the presentation of six traditional dresses from Mexico developed by women artisans from the state of Oaxaca, who draw upon the Tehuantepec embroidery tradition. These garments are a contemporary counterpoint to the vibrant clothing Kahlo became well known for.

For more information on *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon*, please visit <https://marinabaysands.com/museum/exhibitions/frida-kahlo-life-of-an-icon.html>

Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World

Curated by ArtScience Museum with the support of Cristina Kahlo Alcalá – great-niece of Frida Kahlo – and fashion curator, Circe Henestrosa, *Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World* reveals a more intimate portrait of Kahlo through the perspective of her complex medical history. Focusing on the final years of Frida's life, the exhibition highlights her time at the American British Cowdray Hospital in Mexico where she underwent major surgeries and received treatment up until her passing.

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L to R: The x-ray shows where screws and a rod were inserted into Frida's lower back to support her spine; Frida's inpatient vitals chart tracked her body temperature, pulse and breathing rate; this report details her condition before and after the amputation of her lower right leg; pre- and post- operation report documenting her right leg amputation

This exhibition features works from Cristina Kahlo Alcalá's personal collection which are being shown outside of the USA for the first time. They include Frida's medical documents and photographs, an x-ray of the artist's spine taken three months before her passing on 13 July 1954, and clinical datasheets that record her health condition in the lead-up to her last major recorded surgery – the amputation of her lower right leg in 1953 due to gangrene.

Alongside these records are contemporary artworks and exclusive interviews with Cristina Kahlo Alcalá. The exhibition also includes present-day analysis by medical experts from Singapore ranging from an orthopedic surgeon to an anesthetist and a clinical psychologist, that shed new light on the physical and emotional trauma Kahlo would have experienced. *Laid Bare* showcases how despite a lifelong battle with chronic pain, Kahlo stayed resilient and found her own way of managing her health issues, by living life to the fullest and transforming her adversities into artworks.

For more information on *Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World*, please visit <https://marinabaysands.com/museum/exhibitions/laid-bare.html>

Floral Passage: A Tribute to Frida



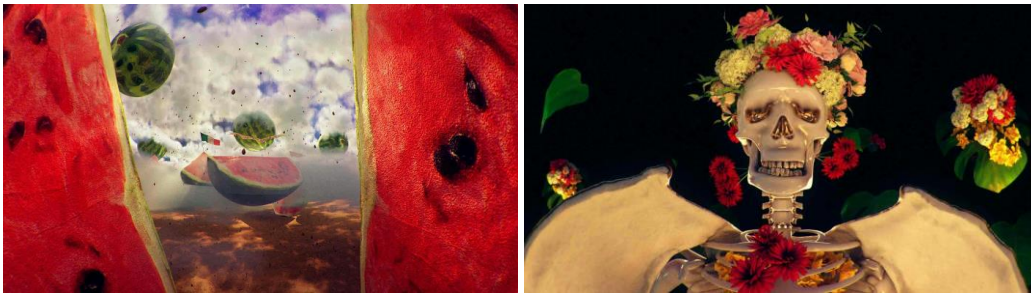
This flower arch is located outside Laid Bare: Frida's Inner World

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ArtScience Museum is also honouring Kahlo with a specially commissioned installation by Singapore-based Mexican artist and curator, Lidia Riveros. Inspired by Mexican traditions, Riveros' flower arch symbolises a warm welcome to the exhibitions with handmade raffia flowers reminiscent of those Frida often wore in her hair. Two parrots symbolising her love and affection for animals also feature in the display while the motif of butterflies signifies the peaceful return of departed souls. Atop the arch, a heart bearing the words, 'Frida Forever', serves as a heartfelt tribute to Frida Kahlo's enduring influence and legacy.

VR Experience – Exquisite Corpse



The last painting done by Frida was of watermelons, which are a recurring motif throughout her body of work

Visitors can complete their exploration of Kahlo's universe with an exhilarating virtual reality adventure at the VR Gallery on Level 4 – diving deeper into the artist's creative world. Developed by Layers of Reality and Blit Studios, *Exquisite Corpse* extends visitors' immersive experience beyond *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon*, by furthering the use of cutting-edge technology. It transports participants into the intimate moments of resilience and inspiration that unfolded from the confines of Frida's bed where she often lay in recovery. This journey weaves her iconic colour palette and evocative textures together while recreating vibrant, dreamlike landscapes inspired by her artworks, encouraging participants to traverse the world she so passionately brought to life through her paintings.

For more details on *Exquisite Corpse*, please visit <https://marinabaysands.com/museum/exhibitions/exquisite-corpse-vr.html>

Tickets and Reservations

All offerings under the season *Frida Forever* will run from 4 May to 1 September 2024. To enjoy exclusive perks and discounts, Sands LifeStyle members can purchase tickets to the various offerings under *Frida Forever* at all Marina Bay Sands box offices and website. Meanwhile, non-members can also purchase tickets via Fever. Guests are strongly encouraged to pre-purchase tickets online prior to their visit.

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For more information on *Frida Forever*, please visit <https://www.marinabaysands.com/museum/frida-forever.html>

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About Marina Bay Sands Pte Ltd

Marina Bay Sands is Asia's leading business, leisure and entertainment destination. The integrated resort features Singapore's largest hotel with approximately 1,850 luxurious rooms and suites, crowned by the spectacular Sands SkyPark and iconic infinity pool. Its stunning architecture and compelling programming, including state-of-the-art convention and exhibition facilities, Asia's best luxury shopping mall, world-class dining and entertainment, as well as cutting-edge exhibitions at ArtScience Museum, have transformed the country's skyline and tourism landscape since it opened in 2010.

Marina Bay Sands is dedicated to being a good corporate citizen to serve its people, communities and environment. As one of the largest players in hospitality, it employs more than 11,500 Team Members across the property. It drives social impact through its community engagement programme, Sands Cares, and leads environmental stewardship through its global sustainability programme, Sands ECO360.

For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com

About ArtScience Museum

ArtScience Museum is a major cultural institution in Singapore that explores the intersection between art, science, technology and culture. It is the cultural component of Marina Bay Sands. Since its opening in February 2011, ArtScience Museum has staged large-scale exhibitions by some of the world's major artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, M.C. Escher, Salvador Dalí, Andy Warhol and Vincent Van Gogh, as well as exhibitions that explore aspects of science and technology – including particle physics, big data, robotics, palaeontology, marine biology and space science. For more information, please visit www.marinabaysands.com/museum.html

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For hi-res images, please click [here](#). (Credit images as indicated in the captions)

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Appendix A: About Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo was born on July 6, 1907, in Mexico City. Her artwork, rich with elements of surrealism, symbolism, and nature, intimately explores themes of identity, postcolonialism, gender, and class in Mexican society. Kahlo's paintings are often intensely personal, with her vivid self-portraits depicting both physical and emotional pain while asserting her personal resilience. Before her death on 13 July 1954, aged just 47, Kahlo created around 200 paintings and artworks of which 55 are self-portraits. Through these works, she communicated not only her anguish and passion but also her revolutionary ideas, her love of nature and her deep engagement with Mexican culture.

Despite her passing 70 years ago, Frida Kahlo's story continues to inspire people from around the world. Her distinctive style has made her a fashion icon who has influenced great fashion houses, with Dior recently paying tribute to her with its 2024 Cruise Collection. Kahlo's ability to incorporate her personal trauma into her art has made her an icon of courage and creativity in the face of adversity. The exhibitions and programmes in *Frida Forever* pay tribute to her enduring legacy and invite visitors to explore different aspects of her story and her impact across the realms of art, fashion, popular culture, and feminism.