

“I hope the exit is joyful,  
and I hope never to return”  
A film review of the intriguing movie, ‘Frida’.

The luminous colors that bring Frida Kahlo’s fascinating uniqueness to life combined with Salma Hayek’s superb performance make Julie Taylor’s ‘Frida’ an outstanding film. The captivating directing and genius scripture produce an excellent account of the life well-known artist. Frida Kahlo was an artist of Mexican heritage, born in the year 1907. Having deficient health since, in 1925 she undergoes an almost-fatal trolley car accident, damaging her backbone and pelvis. Unable to walk for several months, Frida is confined to her bed with little verve; this proves to be the significant era that changes her life forever. She indulges in her painting, seeming to be the only way out of her misery. She paints intensely about pain and suffering. Later, she meets the love of her life, Diego Rivera (played by Alfred Molina), a womanizer and communist, and begins her chaotic relationship with him, leading to two marriages and a persistent heartache. Painting mostly surrealistic images, Frida captures her emotion and her struggle for identity. Her life was overflowing with grief, but her art depicts her rebelliousness and liberated spirit and individualism that, once having caused controversy now represents the inner soul of the modern woman.

The story of the film emphasizes the love between Frida and Diego more than anything else. Both of the painters possessed strong communist opinions, involved in protests and parties. This is encapsulated in the film with an incident in which Diego was forced to remove the communist leader, Vladimir Lenin, whom he had painted within a mural task which had been assigned by John D. Rockefeller. When he refuses due to his unwillingness to compromise his artistic integrity, the painting is destroyed. Frida and Diego remained loyal communists till their dying days.

Julie Taylor brings Frida’s emotional paintings to life through magical realism, with scenes becoming paintings, and paintings becoming scenes. One of Frida’s paintings “What I saw in the water” was used in this effect, by showing Frida in the tub painting her toes, and then overshadowing into the painting. Julie Taylor includes many hidden symbols and meanings into the movie which make Frida’s life more vibrant. When Frida has just encountered with her tragic accident, Taylor portrays this by spreading the “injured” Salma Hayek out on a black background, and surrounding her with glitter, to give a magical and significant effect. Taylor then extracts symbolic skeletons from one of Frida’s paintings and makes them animated. During the period right after her accident, Taylor creates a very gloomy atmosphere using less vibrant color and sad music. For several portions in the film, the color levels vary depending on mood. It is black and white during the unfortunate periods such as when Frida and Diego had broken up, and very colorful and vivacious during the times when she is joyous, such as the highlight when she happily enters her art exhibition dressed up in spirited clothing and she is lying on her bed (due to her recent leg amputation).

I believe that the passionate ‘Frida’ will stay in my mind for years to come. The intense creativity, individuality, and sentiment have burned a deep hole in the part of my brain reserved for artistic thought and philosophy. The amazing detail involved in such a film has given me a true idea of the Artist’s life, and the way her paintings were captured in the film has given me a disturbed, real sense of her demonstrative identity.

The film portrays Frida's life right from her teenage years up to her death in 1954. 'Frida', however, does not get categorized into a great pain and suffering title; it is more of a celebration of her life and how she conquered her pain and suffering to create some of the greatest artworks ever made. To quote Frida herself, "I hope the exit is joyful, and I hope never to return".

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