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Rarely Seen Photographs of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo Taken by Her Hungarian Lover Are Hitting the Auction Block. See Them Here

The "intimate and casual" pictures are up for sale at Sotheby's.

Caroline Goldstein, April 3, 2019



Nikolas Muray, *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera* (1940). Courtesy of Sotheby's.

Ask anyone on the street who his or her favorite artist is, and odds are good that they'll cite Frida Kahlo. The Mexican artist has become an icon of fashion for her brightly patterned dresses and shawls; beauty, for her unruly, bold unibrow, bright lipstick, and braided hair; and of course, as an artist whose magical paintings often incorporate realistic elements of Mexican folk culture.

Though Kahlo was precise about her self-image, a lesser known force in the creation of her public persona was the Hungarian-born photographer (and Kahlo's longtime lover) Nickolas Muray.

Though various pieces of ephemera, including love letters between the two, have long been available to the public, this week a cache of more than 70 personal snapshots of Kahlo, her husband Diego Rivera, and a group of their close friends in Mexico are being offered for sale at Sotheby's in New York.



Nickolas Muray, *Frida in New York*, 1946. © Nickolas Muray Photo Archive. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

The two met through the artist Miguel Covarrubias, who invited Muray to visit him in Mexico City, which was undergoing a period of calm following the turbulent revolution and was quickly becoming a trendy destination for artists and writers, according to Sotheby's specialist Aimee Pflieger. Upon meeting, Kahlo and Muray

were instantly drawn to one another, and carried out a decade-long affair during which time Muray had his lens constantly fixed on Kahlo.

As a photographer for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vanity Fair*, Muray was well versed in capturing striking portraits of the likes of George Gershwin and Dwight D. Eisenhower. And the images he captured of Kahlo on super-saturated Kodachrome film, poised before her show at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, have become a ubiquitous illustration of her and are republished endlessly.

But what makes these images so special, Pflieger stresses, is how “intimate and casual” they are, giving viewers a glimpse at the artists at home, in the kitchen, and surrounded by friends. The photos couldn’t come at a better time: “[Frida Kahlo: Appearances Can Be Deceiving](#)” is on view at the Brooklyn Museum through May 12.



Nikolas Muray, *Frida Kahlo* (1938). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Nikolas Muray (left) and Miguel Covarrubias (1929). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Nikolas Muray, *Frida in Traction* (1940). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Miguel Covarrubias (1925–1946). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Nikolas Muray, *Diego Rivera with gas mask* (1938). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Nikolas Muray, Frida Kahlo, Rosa Covarrubias, and Cristina Kahlo (1939). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Cristina Kahlo, Miguel Covarrubias, Frida Kahlo, and Rosa Covarrubias, (1925–1946). Courtesy of Sotheby's.



Nikolas Muray, *Frida Kahlo at Casa Azul* (1938). Courtesy of Sotheby's.