The Two Fridas

Frida Kahlo. 1939 C.E. Oil on canvas

- YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5l4JBN9l6k
- The painting was the first large-scale work done by Kahlo and is considered one of her most notable paintings (68 x 68 inches)
- Content: It is a double self-portrait, depicting two versions of Kahlo seated together. One is wearing a white European-style dress while the other is wearing a traditional Tehuana dress (some art historians have suggested that this is symbolic of her dual heritage: her father was German and her mother was a mix of Mexican and Amerindian)
- Context:
  - The painting was created in 1939, the same year that Kahlo divorced Diego Rivera
  - According to Kahlo’s friend, Fernando Gamboa, the painting was inspired by two paintings that Kahlo saw earlier that year at the Louvre, Théodore Chassériau’s The Two Sisters and the anonymous Gabrielle d’Estrées and One of Her Sisters.
- Kahlo painted about two hundred works of art, many of which are self-portraits
  - Beginning in her youth, in order to cope with these long periods of recovery (she had many health issues throughout her life), Kahlo became a painter. Nevertheless, the isolation caused by her health problems was always present. She reflected, “I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best.”
- Artistic choices (Form): The two Fridas clasp hands tightly. This bond is echoed by the vein that unites them. Where one is weakened by an exposed heart, the other is strong; where one still pines for her lost love (as underscored by the vein feeding Rivera’s miniature portrait), the other clamps down on that figurative and literal tie with a hemostat.
  - Impact of two hearts, both vulnerable and laid bare to the viewer as a testament to her emotional suffering
Fridas