

**FRIDA
KAHLO**

**DIEGO
RIVERA**

**& MEXICAN
MODERNISM**

FROM THE JACQUES AND
NATASHA GELMAN COLLECTION

2021-2022
Teacher's Packet

NORTON MUSEUM OF ART

Welcome Teachers!

This teaching resource supports your visit to the special exhibition, *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection* at the Norton Museum of Art, on view from October 23rd, 2021, to February 6th, 2022. The packet contains pre, during, and post lessons for use during your museum visit and in the classroom. It can also be used to complement a wide range of classroom projects based on themes of national identity, Mexican modernism, portraiture, muralism and cultural heritage.

Mexican modernist artists highlight the populist and nationalist ideals of post-revolutionary Mexico. The exhibition is divided into ten sections that explore themes such as Home and Family, Circles of Influence, Mother Earth, Modernist Heart, Shifting Views, Spirit of the People, Wounded Body, Creating Frida, Marvelous Real and more. This packet will introduce your students to some of these themes and prepare them for their school visit to the Museum.

We look forward to seeing you and your students at the Norton!

The School and Teacher Programs team:

Meredith Gregory, Director for School and Teacher Programs

Veronica Hatch, School and Teacher Programs Coordinator

About the Norton

To learn more about the Norton's history visit norton.org/about/history

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection
October 23, 2021 – February 6, 2022

Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection will be the Norton's first large-scale exhibition devoted to Mexican Modernism and features the largest grouping of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera works ever to be on view at the institution. As a film producer in Mexico City, Jacques Gelman encountered the leading figures of the artistic renaissance that occurred after the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920. This exhibition features over 150 paintings, works on paper, photographs, and costumes, many of which he and his wife Natasha collected in this period, created by such notable figures as Manuel and Lola Álvarez Bravo, Miguel Covarrubias, Gunther Gerzso, María Izquierdo, Carlos Mérida, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Juan Soriano, and Rufino Tamayo, in addition to Kahlo and Rivera. The Gelmans' close relationship with this community is underscored by the number of portraits of them made by their artist friends in the exhibition. Photographs of Kahlo and Rivera by a global roster of photographers including Lucienne Bloch, Imogen Cunningham, Juan Guzmán, Nikolas Murray, Edward Weston, and Guillermo Kahlo—Frida's father—help round out the lives of these iconic painters.

Mexican Modernism

In 1920, after ten years of bloody civil war, the United Mexican States emerged as a constitutional republic. Although historic inequalities persisted, Mexicans were optimistic about their newly unified nation that combined pre-Hispanic traditions, colonial histories, and modern ideals. Artists and activists sifted through layers of time and collective memory to forge new visual and political identities. In Europe and the Americas, modernist artists broke with styles of the past as they searched for authentic expression. In Mexico specifically, modernist artists gave visual form to the ideals of the young nation. Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera were at the forefront of this effort.

For more information about the exhibition visit [Norton.org](https://www.norton.org)



THE EXHIBITION IS ORGANIZED BY THE VERGEL FOUNDATION AND MONDOMOSTRE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE BELLAS ARTES Y LITERATURA (INBAL).

PREMIER SPONSORS: RITA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN, JANE CARROLL AND LEO ARNABOLDI, JANE B. HOLZER, LEONARD AND JUDY LAUDER, POINT GAMMON FOUNDATION; MAJOR SPONSORS: Y. MICHELE KANG, BONNIE MCELVEEN-HUNTER, ANONYMOUS BENEFACITOR; SPONSORS: CARY BROWN & STEVEN EPSTEIN, PAM AND BOB GOERGEN, MR. AND MRS. RICHARD E. SALOMON, ROBBIE AND BRUCE TOLL, WILLIAM AND SARAH ROSS SOTER ANONYMOUS BENEFACITOR; SUPPORTERS: ROGER W. FERGUSON, JR AND ANNETTE L. NAZARETH, RONNIE HEYMAN, MICHELLE AND JOSEPH JACOBS, ANN AND TOM JOHNSON, BETTY AND JOHN LEVIN, HILARIE AND MITCHELL MORGAN, JEAN S. SHARF, DOROTHY AND CRAIG STAPLETON, KELLY WILLIAMS AND ANDREW FORSYTH, SUE AND BEAU WRIGLEY.

PREMIER CORPORATE SPONSOR: ACQUAVELLA

MODERNIST HEART



Carlos Mérida (Guatemalan, 1891 - 1985)

Festival of the Birds, 1959

Polished board

Board: 19 11/16 x 15 3/4 in. (50 x 40 cm)

Framed: 27 3/16 x 23 1/4 x 2 in. (69 x 59 x 5 cm)

Private Collection

© 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Type: *Special Exhibition, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection*

Grade Levels: K-5

Learning Standards: ELA, SS, VA, WL

Key terms: National identity, Mexican Modernism, identity, cultural heritage, abstraction and symbols.

PRE-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

About the Artist and the Artwork

Guatemalan artist Carlos Mérida moved to Mexico City in 1919, where he helped Diego Rivera create his murals. In both Mérida's large-scale murals and smaller works, he combined the geometric abstraction of European Modernism with pre-Hispanic aesthetics. *Festival of Birds* illustrates this approach—the inclusion of the birds above the figures' outstretched hands may be inspired by a glyph of a bird from Maya texts, which Mérida was known to admire.

Modernist Heart

Mexicanidad, an identity that merged Indigenous culture with national heritage, took root in the hearts of artists, poets, photographers, and musicians. They experimented with style and imagery in search of a new authenticity that linked pre-Hispanic and contemporary styles. Aware of the global movement of modernism—which stressed innovation in form, a tendency toward abstraction, and an emphasis on materials and process—Mexican modernists turned to ancient artworks as models for abstraction and stylistic guides for figurative realism.

Populist values and communal participation were guiding principles for the Mexican avant-garde. Muralists addressed both heroic and tragic histories in vibrant, monumental works that were intended to instill optimism and pride. They were considered intellectual workers who made revolutionary and nationalist ideals visible.

Observe & Describe

Have students take a quiet moment to look carefully at *Festival of the Birds*. Please allow at least 30 seconds of close looking in silence.

Questions for students:

- What is the first thing you notice about this painting?
- Can you describe the lines?
- How about the color?

Looking Closer

- Carlos Mérida incorporates figurative elements into this abstracted work of art. Are there any recognizable figures? Ask students to list them.
- Mérida uses lines to create this artwork; can you define the types of lines and geometric shapes he uses to create this painting?

Let's Start a Conversation

As a Guatemalan artist Mérida was influenced by Mayan culture and indigenous themes. These Pre-Hispanic subjects, like animals, Mayan hieroglyphics and warm colors appear in *Festival of the Birds*. His travels abroad also influenced his paintings. Mérida studied cubist art by painters such as Pablo Picasso and was interested in geometric abstraction and surrealism. Mérida combines geometrical forms and aspects of his Mayan heritage in this painting.

- Can you describe what types of figures you see in this painting?
- Can you describe what these figures are doing?
- What is the most important part of this painting to you?
- Are these figures telling a story?
If so, what do you think the characters, setting and plot are?

At the Museum

- Book a tour norton.org/schools
- Request to see *Festival of the Birds* by Carlos Mérida at the time of booking.
- Ask students, now that you have seen this artwork in the galleries, is it different than you imagined? How? Has the meaning of the artwork changed for you?
- How do the works of art displayed next to *Festival of the Birds* Carlos Mérida relate to each other?

POST-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

Questions for follow up in the classroom.

- Carlos Mérida was influenced by his heritage and his travels to other countries. Are you interested in traveling to other countries to learn more about their culture? If so, where?
- Can you think of someone or a place that has made a huge impact in your life?
- What emotions do you think you experienced while viewing and learning about this work of art?
- What did you like the most about the *Festival of the Birds* by Carlos Mérida?

SHIFTING VIEWS



Lola Álvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1907-1993)

Burial at Yalalag (Oaxaca, Mexico), 1946

Gelatin silver print

7 1/2 x 9 in. (19.1 x 22.9 cm)

The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of 20th Century Mexican Art and the Vergel Foundation

© 2021 Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Type: *Special Exhibition, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection*

Grade Levels: 6-12

Learning Standards: ELA, SS, VA, WL

Key terms: National identity, Mexican Modernism, photography, identity, cultural heritage, everyday life.

PRE-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

About the Artist and the Artwork

Lola Álvarez Bravo was born Dolores Martínez in Jalisco, Mexico in 1903. She married photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo in 1925 and was involved in many artistic, intellectual, and political circles in Mexico City. After her separation from her husband in 1934, she used photography as a means to support herself and her young son.

Álvarez Bravo became an important modern artist who contributed to the new modernist photographic aesthetic of sharp focus and a black and white color palette highlighting line, light, texture, shapes and shadow. Often modern photographers depicted scenes of everyday life. Contemporaries reported seeing Álvarez Bravo waiting patiently in the shuffle of a crowd trying to capture the perfect composition.

Burial at Yalalag (Oaxaca, Mexico) shows a funerary procession in the Villa Hidalgo Yalalag- a Zapotec village located in the Sierra Juárez Mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico. The Zapotec indigenous tribe are a population of peoples living in the Eastern and Southern Oaxaca region in Mexico.

Shifting Views

In the tumultuous years following World War I, photographers from the Americas and Europe exchanged ideas and practices of modernist photography with artists in Mexico. American photographer Edward Weston followed his lover, Italian photographer Tina Modotti, to Mexico City, where together they established a studio. The hallmarks of modernist style in photography were abstraction, geometry, asymmetry, strong contrast, and sharp focus. These artists preferred black-and-white images and often chose everyday scenes as subject matter. Whereas early photography largely served either commercial or documentary functions, modernist images focused on formal qualities and the artist's vision.

Observe & Describe

Have students take a quiet moment to look carefully at *Burial at Yalalag (Oaxaca, Mexico)*. Please allow at least 30 seconds of close looking in silence. Ask them to think about how their eyes move across the photograph.

Questions for students:

- Where was your eye drawn to first? Why do you think your eye was drawn there? What other details did you notice?
- Think about the elements of art such as line, shape, color, light, texture and space. How do they make your eye move around the work of art?

Looking Closer

- How do these elements contribute to the feeling of the work of art?
- Think about the environment. Where might this be? What makes you say that?
- Focus on the subjects (people) in this work of art. What do you notice about them?
- How are they arranged in this composition? What do you notice about the way they dress? Their posture and movement?

Let's Start a Conversation

- What is the perspective (point of view) of this work of art?
- Notice you cannot see their faces or expressions. Why do you think the artist chose to depict the subjects in this way?
- How might the meaning of the work of art change if the artist chose another perspective?

At the Museum

- Book a tour [norton.org/schools](https://www.norton.org/schools)
- Request to see *Burial at Yalalag (Oaxaca, Mexico)* at the time of booking.
- Ask students, now that you have seen this artwork in the galleries, is it different than you imagined? How? Has the meaning of the work changed for you?
- How do the works of art displayed next to *Burial at Yalalag (Oaxaca, Mexico)* relate to each other?

POST-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

- Work in pairs. Think like cultural anthropologists. What are some conclusions you can draw about the Zapotec culture in Yalalag based on what you see visually?
- If Lola Álvarez Bravo were to visit your community, what do you think would be the most essential every day life scenes for her to capture?

MOTHER EARTH



Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907-1954)

Self-Portrait with Monkeys, 1943

Oil on canvas

32 1/8 x 24 3/4 in. (81.5 x 63 cm)

The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of 20th Century Mexican Art and the Vergel Foundation

© 2021 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Type: Special Exhibition, *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection*

Grade Levels: K-12

Learning Standards: ELA, SS, VA, WL

Key terms: National identity, Mexican Modernism, portraiture, identity, cultural heritage, everyday life, symbolism.

PRE-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

About the Artist and the Artwork

Frida Kahlo was born in Coyocán, Mexico, a suburb of Mexico City, in 1907. Her father was a German photographer, her mother, a Mexican from Oaxaca. Her life forever changed at the age of 18 when a bus she was riding was struck by a tram. During her recovery, she began painting in bed. She had a life-long spinal injury that required multiple operations. Her health is the subject of many of her works of art.

After her recovery, Kahlo became a leading member of artistic and political circles in Mexico City and through them met Diego Rivera. They were married in 1929. After some time in the United States, Rivera and Kahlo settled in Mexico City where Kahlo became a professor at La Esmeralda, a prestigious art school. *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* was made during her first years at the school in 1943. The tassel on her traditional *huipil* blouse suggests a tassel from an academic doctor's cap. The monkeys may refer to her devoted students, called Los Fridos. Kahlo also had monkeys as pets, and they link to Mexico's ancestral past. Monkeys are often seen in traditional Aztec works of art. The symbol on Kahlo's *huipil* also references the Aztec past and stands for earthquake or perpetual movement, perhaps in regards to Kahlo's personal life or political views. Many Mexican modernist artists looked to pre-Hispanic cultures as they worked to find a collective identity, an impulse called *Mexicanidad*.

Mexican modernists also often referenced nature in their works of art. In *Self-Portrait with Monkeys*, Frida Kahlo surrounds herself with plants that you might see in Mexico, highlighting her own connection to the land.

Frida Kahlo died in 1954 at her home, La Casa Azul, where she grew up, kept her monkeys and spent much of her married life with Diego Rivera. Kahlo is one of the most well-known artists in the world. Her works of art deal with themes of love, loss, disability, Mexican identity, politics and womanhood.

Mother Earth

After the Revolution, Mexican modernist artists depicted the landscape as a place of sacred beauty and collective memory where people could both connect to their past and envision the future. Religious, cultural, social, and spiritual events of ancient Mexico were tied to the earth. During Spanish occupation, Indigenous people lost control of their ancestral lands. For four hundred years, wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. The reforms instituted in the 1930s restored the ancient *ejido* system of communal land ownership.

Observe & Describe

Have students take a quiet moment to look carefully at *Self-Portrait with Monkeys*. Please allow at least 30 seconds of close looking in silence. Ask them to think about how their eyes move across the canvas.

Questions for students:

- Where was your eye drawn to first? Why do you think your eye was drawn there? What other details did you notice?
- Think about the elements of art such as line, shape, color, light, texture and space. How do they make your eye move around the work of art?

Looking Closer

- How do these elements contribute to the feeling of the work of art?
- Think about the environment. Where might this be?
- Focus on the person in this work of art. Take time to jot down 2-3 words that you think best describe this person.

Let's Start a Conversation

- Based on your observations about this person, what conclusions can you make about her personality?
- What do you notice about the way she dresses?
- How do the monkeys and the person interact with each other? What do you think their relationship might be?
- Are there any hints as to when this work of art might have been painted?

At the Museum

- Book a tour [norton.org/schools](https://www.norton.org/schools)
- Request to see *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* at the time of booking.
- Ask students, now that you have seen this artwork in the galleries, is it different than you imagined? How? Has the meaning of the work changed for you?
- How do the works of art displayed next to *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* relate to the work of art?

POST-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

Questions for follow up in the classroom. This discussion can be done as a large group, small group breakouts, in pairs, or a mix of all three!

- Frida Kahlo and Mexican Modernists sought to create a new visual identity for Mexicans through their art. What are some visual representations and/or symbols that we see representing the United States?
- Frida Kahlo also shaped her own visual identity through her art. What visual representations and/or symbols would you use to show your identity?
- Why do you think having a shared visual identity is so important to a country?

ACTIVITY

You can learn more about *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* and get inspired by a corresponding art activity at norton.org/educators.

SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE



Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886 – 1957)

En el Arsenal, 1928

from the mural cycle *Ballad of the Proletarian Revolution* (1928-1929)

Fresco

Level III, Courtyard of the Fiestas

Ministry of Public Education, Mexico City

© 2021 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

THIS MURAL IS REPRODUCED IN THE GALLERY SPACE.

Type: Special Exhibition, *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism* from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection

Grade Levels: 6-12

Learning Standards: ELA, SS, VA, WL

Key terms: National identity, Mexican Modernism, portraiture, muralism, identity, cultural heritage, everyday life, social and political events

PRE-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

About the Artist and the Artwork

Diego Rivera (1886–1957), born in Guanajuato, Mexico, is one of the most recognized and popular artists in the world. He is known for painting murals in Mexico and the United States. Many of these murals were commissioned by the Mexican government. Rivera was interested in representing Mexico's national identity and so he focused on the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples following *Mexicanidad*. He was influenced by his travels to Europe where he met Cubist artists like Pablo Picasso and George Braque and explored new ways of painting.

After the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, artists centered their work on the identity and future of Mexico. *Mexicanidad*, or looking back to the Indigenous past to find an authentic Mexican identity, helped shape modern art in Mexico. Diego Rivera's murals illustrated and told a story about Mexican history, his personal, social, and political views. In Rivera's *En el Arsenal*, he included characters like David Alfaro Siqueiros (a friend, and member of the Mexican muralism movement dressed in army clothing holding a rifle) and Emiliano Zapata (a Mexican Revolution leader) in the midst of a group of leftist activists. At the center of mural, he depicted Frida Kahlo handing out ammunition.

This mural is part of a series commissioned for the Ministry of Education in Mexico City. In this portion, Rivera decided not to include governmental figures, but to focus on Indigenous people, workers, and artists together, uniting for a common cause and fighting for their rights. This mural depicts the Communist ideal of workers organized, ready to fight capitalism and institute a socialist future. In the new United Mexican States, Mexicans like Rivera celebrated the nation's mixed, or *mestizo*, identity, seeing in it the past, present, and future of their country.

Spirit of the People

Diego Rivera, along with David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco led the Mexican muralism movement. Public murals instructed and inspired on a grand scale, engaging with social and political issues and often uniting people in a call to action. Building on a mural tradition dating to pre-Hispanic times, these public commissions became a prominent voice of Mexican Modernism and helped create a new national identity after the Mexican Revolution.

Observe & Describe

Have students take a quiet moment to look carefully at *En el Arsenal*. Please allow at least 30 seconds of close looking in silence.

Questions for students:

- What is the first thing you notice about this mural?
- Can you describe what you see? List as many as details as possible.
- Are any of the figures in this mural familiar to you?

Looking Closer

Through his art, Diego Rivera wanted to portray the lives of Indigenous peoples and the sense of Mexican identity and pride, especially after the Mexican Revolution. Rivera used murals to communicate to the world the dignity of Mexican culture, its political heritage, and its leftist ideals.

Looking from the background to the middle and foreground of Rivera's mural, discuss the following questions?

- Can you describe the characters?
- What do you think they are doing?
- What else is happening on this painting?

Let's Start a Conversation

Diego Rivera's mural reflected what was happening in Mexico during this time in history. Ask students to work in pairs to discuss their current lives living in the United States.

- Guide students to think about what is happening in their everyday lives, or in politics, social issues, popular culture, environment, or even technology.
- You can extend the lesson by discussing as a group how the events discussed above affect them on a personal, community or national level.
- Students will work in pairs to illustrate or write a short essay about one topic that is most important to them.

At the Museum

- Book a tour norton.org/schools
- Request to see *En el Arsenal* by Diego Rivera at the time of booking.
- Ask students, now that you have seen this artwork in the galleries, is it different than you imagined? How? Has the meaning of the work changed for you?
- How do the works of art displayed next to the reproduction of Diego Rivera's mural relate to this artwork?

POST-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

Diego Rivera used his mural paintings to communicate the Mexican people's identity, heritage, and promise for the future. Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo collected ancient Mexican art, and they shared an interest in Indigenous iconography, revolutionary political views, and *Mexicanidad*, although their artistic styles were very different.

Questions for follow up in the classroom.

- When you think about the term national identity, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- How about symbols or costumes? Can you share what symbols make you think of your national identity or cultural heritage?
- If you can think of a specific person or character in history that represented the revolutionary spirit of that period in time, who might that be and why?
- What emotions do you think you experienced while viewing and learning about this work of art?

HOME AND FAMILY



Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886 – 1957)

Modesta, 1937

Oil on canvas

Canvas: 31 1/2 x 23 1/4 in. (80 x 59 cm)

Framed: 40 1/4 x 31 15/16 x 3 1/8 in. (102.1 x 81 x 79 cm)

The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of 20th Century Mexican Art and the Vergel Foundation

© 2021 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Type: Special Exhibition, *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Mexican Modernism from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection*

Grade Levels: K-12

Learning Standards: ELA, SS, VA, WL

Key terms: National identity, Mexican Modernism, portraiture, identity, cultural heritage, everyday life.

PRE-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

About the Artist and the Artwork

Diego Rivera (1886–1957), born in Guanajuato, Mexico, is one of the most recognized and popular artists in the world. He is known for painting murals in Mexico and the United States. Many of these murals were commissioned by the Mexican government. Rivera was interested in his national identity and in representing the everyday lives of Mexico's indigenous peoples and his artworks often display the theme of *Mexicanidad*. He was influenced by his travels to Europe where he met cubist artists like Pablo Picasso and George Braque who explored new ways of painting.

Home and Family

Home and family are at the center of Mexican life and culture. Everyday scenes—children playing in fields of sunflowers and Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera surrounded by familiar objects in their house—point to a deep reverence for familial relationships and the role of the home as a place that provides sustenance while nurturing community and identity. Diego Rivera and other Mexican modernists sought to communicate these ideals in their art. Traditional dress and furnishings shown in everyday settings expressed *Mexicanidad*—Mexican identity embedded in Indigenous and national heritage.

Rivera once said *"I know now that he who hopes to be universal in his art must plant in his own soil. . . . The secret of my best work is that it is Mexican."*

Observe & Describe

Have students take a quiet moment to look carefully at *Modesta*. Please allow at least 30 seconds of close looking in silence.

Questions for students:

- What is the first thing you notice about this painting?
- List as many colors as you can see.
- Can you describe the objects in this space?

Looking Closer

Diego Rivera often portrayed the everyday life of the Mexican people in his paintings. Rivera used his art to celebrate Mexico's cultural heritage, including that of Indigenous peoples. He had a deep pride and sense of Mexican identity. This artwork is called *Modesta*, which is the name of the girl portrayed in this painting.

- What else do you notice about this painting?
- Can you describe the character in this painting?
- How old do you think this character is?
- What type of clothing is she wearing? Have you ever seen anyone that dresses like her?
- What do you think she is doing?
- Let's pose with this character, what do you think she may be thinking?
- Where do you think she is?
- How would you describe her expression?

Let's Start a Conversation

Diego Rivera was an important artistic figure in his native country of Mexico. *Modesta* is an example of the artist's "figurative work", meaning art that suggests visible reality. Rivera painted her in Indigenous clothing wearing a white top with decorations on her blouse and a dark puffy skirt. Her cheeks and lips are orange mirroring the flower decorations on the back of the chair. *Modesta's* portrait may have been something very personal to Diego, like an old photograph or an heirloom, which means a treasure from the past, something with great emotional value.

- Can you describe what the most important part of this painting is to you?
- Do you have an heirloom, a special treasure from the past? Why is this object important to you?
- Do you have any pictures from when you were a baby, or have you seen pictures of family members from the past? How does this make you feel?
- Think of *Modesta* by Diego Rivera. Is there a picture you have seen, either of you or a family member, that reminds you of her?

At the Museum

- Book a tour [norton.org/schools](https://www.norton.org/schools)
- Request to see *Modesta* by Diego Rivera at the time of booking.
- Ask students, now that you have seen this artwork in the galleries, is it different than you imagined? How? Has the meaning of the work changed for you?
- How do the works of art displayed next to *Modesta* by Diego Rivera relate to the artwork?

POST-LESSON IN THE CLASSROOM

Besides the murals and paintings Rivera made which depicted major events in the history of Mexico, he also painted smaller and more intimate pictures with themes related to his culture's everyday life.

Questions for follow up in the classroom.

- Is there anything in this painting familiar to you?
- How important it is for you to have collections of pictures or objects that remind you of your past? Why?
- What emotions do you think you experienced while viewing and learning about this work of art?

Credits

This teacher packet was created by Meredith Gregory, Director of School and Teacher Programs and Veronica Hatch, School and Teacher Programs Coordinator at the Learning and Community Engagement department. Design credit to Lorraine Bond, Design Director and Arthur Salazar, Graphic Designer.

Funder

This program was made possible by the generosity of The Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation and the Itto Willits Charitable Foundation, with additional support provided by The William Randolph Hearst Endowment Fund for Education and Outreach Programs.

K-12 School Tours

The Museum invites K-12 audiences to engage in and explore the Norton collection through themed tours that connect to Florida Standards. All learning levels welcome.

We look forward to seeing you and your students at the Norton!

To learn more and to book a school tour norton.org/schools

Norton Museum of Art

1450 S. Dixie Hwy, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

norton.org