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'Frida', many-sided Mexican paintress

A FASCINATING PORTRAIT

by Jan Bik

The life of Frida Kahlo, important Mexican paintress, who lived from 1907 to 1954, was haunted with malevil. Physical trouble the most, which also troubled her mind.

But however she dependent on her bed, crock, corset and wheelchair, she enjoyed life and the relations with people in the focus of art and politics. Mexican director Paul Leduc portrayed her in an intense way.

He works with fragments, without too much dialogue, with often beautiful, sometimes horrifying images and expresses how Frida lived, with whom she shared her life, which were her political interests.

And, not emphasized, he spends attention to her work, paintings of a surrealist character, often self-portraits, on which are seen the traces of a life with severe suffering.

Frida Kahlo was the daughter of a Hungarian who emigrated from Germany to Mexico and a woman who was born in Mexico from Indian and Spanish blood. The temperament she received from both, would colour her life.

She got polio on her twelfth, becomes the victim of a bus accident when she was eighteen, has several operations and ends in the wheelchair, when her right leg is amputated. She marries when she is twenty-two with the important Mexican muralist Diego Rivera and discovers that she is not able to carry children in her body. The painting serves to assimilate her physical and psychological problems. One of these pains is the infidelity of her husband.

Politically Frida and Diego are on the side of the revolution, of Zapata, of the communists. They also often meet the poor, especially when they are singing for their dead ancestors. They also give hospitality to Trotzki for some time. When Frida's body is brought to the Palacio de Bellas Artes, friends cover the coffin with a red flag, with hammer and sickle.

Music and singing play an important role in this film. Popular music, tunes, songs about love, but also opera. Music which keeps on being in your mind.

With modest means Paul Leduc shows, due to beautiful acting by Ofelia Medina and Juan Jose Gurrola as Frida and Diego, a fascinating, unusual, fragmented and retrospective, image of life and dying of this very special woman.

Her paintings are not the first thing in the film. Some paintings are shown like her work 'natural life', as a logical end of the film. Because the paintings that's all that is still to be seen in a special museum in Mexico DF.

'FRIDA' is shown in the Filmcentrum Nijmegen.