

Drawing Inspiration from Art

Nestor Carrillo

When the storm is stronger than ever and it's hard to find any relief, I need help to keep going. I often turn to my family and friends. However, sometimes family and friends are not enough motivation for a person who has big expectations in life. For deeper inspiration, I turn to art. My own drawing helps me deal with stress. And the work of great artists, particularly Frida Kahlo, a famous Mexican painter, inspires me. Her expressive portraits reveal a life that was both exciting and painful; her story motivates me to pursue my artistic dreams.

Drawing Helps Me Think

Since I moved from my parents' house, I have faced numerous obstacles. Because of the recession, I have been struggling financially. Sometimes, I have just \$20 in my pocket to cover my personal expenses for the whole week. It is hard to have hope or motivation at this point. However, if I have a piece of paper and a pencil, I can draw. Drawing relaxes me. It helps me think of



"The Light that Guides Me," by the author.

solutions to my problems. In "The Light That Guides Me," a young boy (me) sits on a bed looking at the window hoping for a miracle to happen. The empty wallet symbolizes pov-

erty, and the light coming through the window represents hope. The tears rolling down the boy's cheek illustrate the boy's nostalgia for everything he left behind.

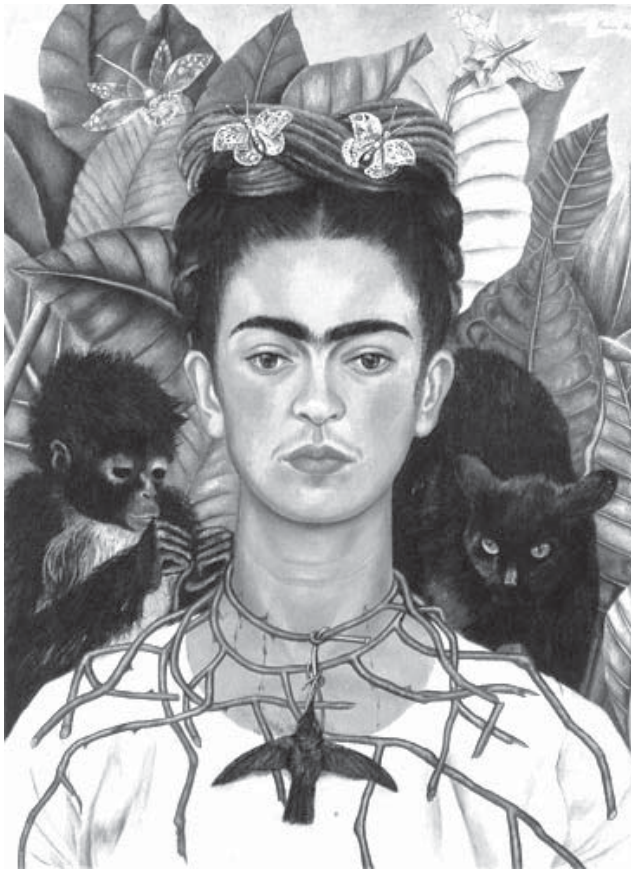
When I finished this drawing and studied it, I realized that I was being dramatic. Crying and hoping for miracles would not help me find a job. I had to be wiser. The next day I got out of bed and started to apply for every job that I could. I felt positive and empowered. I was taking control of my life. Now, six years later I'm a professional actor and I am continuing my education at Borough of Manhattan Community College. I work hard every day to accomplish my goals and one day, with the money I make, I will support my parents.

Great Art Can Be Transformative

To stay motivated, I sometimes turn to great art. There are so many great artists, but Frida Kahlo has been an especially important role model for me. At age six, she got polio, which damaged her right leg. She also had an accident at age 15, which left her with serious injuries, including a broken spinal column and many other broken bones. Also, an iron handrail pierced her abdomen and her uterus, which made it hard for her to get pregnant later in life. In addition to these traumas, she was obsessed with a man (the famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera) who did not love her back equally.

She used her paintings to communicate about

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“Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Humming-bird” (Reprinted here under the “fair use” principle of U.S. copyright law. See <wikipedia.org> for more information.)

her struggles with her body and with love. They are powerful, expressive pieces by a strong Mexican woman who, despite her pain, kept fighting to enjoy her life. When I see how Kahlo transformed the most harmful moments into colorful and meaningful portraits, I realize that we have to love life with its good and bad moments, because both of them are important for our own personal growth as human beings.

Finding Beauty in Struggle

Since I have never taken art classes, I know that my drawings are very simple. Still, being able to express myself through art helps me think about myself and find solutions to my problems. Looking at the work of great artists, particularly

someone like Frida Kahlo, reminds me that you can create beauty out of struggle. When I see her problems reflected in her paintings, I feel blessed. She motivates me to

learn from my struggles and to get stronger and wiser. We all have bad moments. But art helps us embrace our chance for happiness and success.

Frida Kahlo used her paintings to communicate about her struggles with her body and with love.

Nestor Carrillo was born in El Salvador and was raised in Mexico. Now, he lives in the Bronx, NY. He works as a professional actor on stage and in TV commercials. He is also an artist and stage designer. His main goal is to collaborate in the search for World Peace. Meanwhile, he wishes to thank the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) and the Continuing Education Program. He recently passed the GED test and will start college soon.



Resilience from Art

Write two ways the author draws inspiration from art.

1. _____

2. _____

Who is your favorite visual artist? (It doesn't have to be someone famous.) Write about why this artist inspires you.