



## AP<sup>®</sup> Art History 2003 Sample Student Responses

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6. The following is a quotation from a letter written by Frida Kahlo in 1952.

Some critics have tried to classify me as a Surrealist, but I do not consider myself to be a Surrealist. . . . Really, I do not know whether my paintings are Surrealist or not, but I do know they are the frankest expression of myself. . . . I detest Surrealism. To me it seems to be a decadent manifestation of bourgeois art, a deviation from the true art that the people hope for from the artist. . . . I wish to be worthy with my painting, of the people to whom I belong and to the ideas that strengthen me. . . . I want my work to be a contribution to the struggle of the people for peace and liberty.

Do you agree or disagree with Kahlo's assertion that she is not a Surrealist? Defend your position by discussing specific elements from both the work shown and the quotation. (10 minutes)

I agree strongly with Kahlo's assertion and denial as a surrealist. While her works juxtapose bizarre subjects, her personal philosophy and emotional connection to her pieces seems more align with that of Symbolist and Expressionist painters. Surrealism generally appears more compositionally classical and clear than Kahlo's work. Surrealist such as Magritte and Dalí also seem more intrigued by a dream-like imaginative reality. Kahlo's work, however, is so connected to the reality of her life and her personal "struggle ~~of the~~ . . . ~~people~~ for peace and liberty" ~~that~~ which separates her work from the Surrealists. Kahlo's art also represents so strongly her cultural background in Mexico and regional ideas from which Surrealist don't include. Her use of landscapes and animals show this relation and make her work as she says "of the people to whom I belong." The conceptual nature of her work and direct combination of her ideas and experiences are so literal - her work expresses

~~a literal~~ literal vision of her physical & subconscious reality. The images of roots wrapping around Khalo's neck in this piece and the dead bird hung there show this. While the primary subject in this piece is a portrait of Khalo it is enhanced by the inclusion of ~~the~~ these intrusive elements that symbolize an intimate part of her life. The fact that Khalo painted herself so frequently binds her closely to her art, reveals the intimate nature of her paintings and separates them from surrealism which rarely includes the personal emotions of the artist.

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Do you agree or disagree with Kahlo's assertion that she is not a Surrealist? Defend your position by discussing specific elements from both the work shown and the quotation. (10 minutes)

~~I agree with Frida Kahlo that she is not a Surrealist.~~ I do not agree with Frida Kahlo. I believe that she is a surrealist. She says that she paints the "frankest expression of [herself]" but it isn't practical. In the piece shown, she is in a jungle with apes all around her, butterflies around her head and thorns around her neck. She is a surrealist because she was never there in the jungle in that position. It is a strange painting and that's why it's surreal. She shows herself as she really looks but everything else around her wasn't really there when she was drawing the picture. She added them in with her imagination.