Directed by Julie Taymor
Based on Hayden Herrera’s book *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*
Screenplay by Clancy Sigal, Diane Lake, Gregory Nava & Anna Thomas
Produced by Lindsay Flickinger, Sarah Green, Nancy Hardin, Salma Hayek, Roberto Sneider, Lizz Speed
Original Music by Elliot Goldenthal
Cinematography by Rodrigo Prieto
Film Editing by Françoise Bonnot
Production Design by Felipe Fernández del Paso
Art Direction by Bernardo Trujillo
Set Decoration by Hania Robledo
Costume Design by Julie Weiss
Makeup department: Judy Chin...key makeup artist, John E. Jackson...prosthetic makeup artist, Matthew W. Mungle...prosthetic designer, Regina Reyes...3D body painting

Salma Hayek...Frida Kahlo
Alfred Molina...Diego Rivera
Antonio Banderas...David Alfaro Siqueiros
Valeria Golino...Lupe Marin
Diego Luna...Alejandro 'Alex'
Mía Maestro...Cristina Kahlo
Edward Norton...Nelson Rockefeller
Roger Rees...Guillermo Kahlo
Ashley Judd...Tina Modotti
Geoffrey Rush...Leon Trotsky
Margarita Sanz...Natalia Trotsky
Omar Rodriguez...André Breton
Karine Plantadit-Bageot...Paris Chanteuse

**Academy Awards**
Best Makeup – John E. Jackson, Beatrice De Alba
Best Music, Original Score – Elliot Goldenthal


November 22, 2011 (XXIII:13)
Julie Taymor, **FRIDA** (2002, 123 min.)


Julie Taymor (From Wikipedia)

Julie Taymor (born December 15, 1952) is an American director of theater, opera and film. Taymor's work has received many accolades from critics, and she has earned two Tony Awards out of four nominations, the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Costume Design, an Emmy Award and an Academy Award nomination for Original Song. She is widely known for directing the stage musical, The Lion King, for which she became the first woman to win the Tony Award for directing a musical, in addition to a Tony Award for Original Costume Design. She was the director of the Broadway musical Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark but left in March 2011, following artistic differences with the producers.

Taymor was born in Newton, Massachusetts, the daughter of Elizabeth (née Bernstein), a political science teacher, and Melvin Lester Taymor, a gynecologist, both of Jewish descent. Taymor's interest in theatre took root early in her life. At the age of seven, she was already drawing her sister into stagings of children's stories for her parents. By age nine, she was entranced by the Boston Children's Theatre and became involved with them. In high school, she became interested in international travel, and made trips to both Sri Lanka and India with the Experiment in International Living. Being the youngest member of theatre groups became common, as she joined Julie Portman's Theatre Workshop of Boston at the age of 15. Yearning for a more in-depth approach, Taymor went to Paris to study with L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq. During her studies there, she became exposed to mime which helped in the development of her physical sensibilities.

Although in 1970 Taymor was enrolled in Oberlin College in Ohio, she sought experience with Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre and other companies and studied through correspondence. Hearing that director Herbert Blau would be moving to Oberlin, she returned there and auditioned successfully, becoming, once again, the youngest member of a troupe. In 1973, Taymor attended a summer program of the American Society for Eastern Arts in Seattle. The instructors were performers of Indonesian topeng masked dance-drama and wayang kulit shadow puppetry. This would prove to have a great effect on Taymor in later years. Taymor graduated from Oberlin College with a major in mythology and folklore and Phi Beta Kappa honors in 1974. In 1980 she met composer Elliot Goldenthal, and the two became partners in both life and in their work.

After college, Taymor used a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to study pre-­Bunraku puppetry on Awaji Island, Japan, to learn more about experimental theatre, puppetry and visually oriented theatre. Taymor's greatest acclaim as a director for the stage has come from the popular musical The Lion King (1997), an adaptation of the animated film. Taymor received two Tony Awards for her work on The Lion King, one for Direction and one for Costume Design, making her the first woman to receive a Tony Award for directing a musical.

In 1991, Taymor won the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship (genius award) for her innovative work in theatre.

Taymor has also worked in film in recent years, directing Titus (1999) and Frida (2002). Both movies received positive reviews for their stylish filming; Frida was the more acclaimed of the two, garnering Oscar nominations in six categories and winning in two (Best Makeup and Best Original Score). Taymor and her long-time partner Goldenthal were co-­nominees in the Best Original Song category.

For the Metropolitan Opera 2005-06 season, Taymor directed a successful production of The Magic Flute. It was revised for the 2006-07 season and, in addition to full-length performances, was adapted for a 100-minute version over the holiday season to appeal to children. That version of the opera was the first of a series of NCM Fathom Live on the Big Screen presentations of MET operas downloaded via satellite to movie theaters across North America and parts of Europe for the 2006-07 season.

In June 2006, Taymor directed the opera Grendel for the Los Angeles Opera, starring Eric Owens, which was also presented as part of the Summer 2006 Lincoln Center Festival in New York City. Taymor's more recent work has been as director of the film Across the Universe, a 1960s love story set to the music of The Beatles and starring Jim Sturgess and Evan Rachel Wood. The film opened in September 2007 and received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Comedy/Musical in 2008.


In April 2007, it was announced that Marvel Studios was preparing to make a musical adaptation of Spider-Man for Broadway. Taymor was selected to direct the show and write the book with Glen Berger. The production features music and lyrics by Bono and The Edge. The musical, Spider-Man, Turn Off the Dark, was scheduled to begin previews on November 28, 2010, at the Foxwoods Theatre, with the repeatedly-delayed official opening finally held on June 14, 2011. On March 9, 2011, it was reported by The New York Times that Taymor would be leaving her role as director of Spider-Man after disputes with the show's producers, who wanted to drastically alter the existing storyline and general artistic direction.

In a March 14, 2011 piece by Roger Friedman, it was reported that Taymor will receive her original Spider-Man credits, with sources saying that Spider-Man producer Michael Cohl and Bono did bring in a script doctor, music supervisor and other new members for the creative team. As of June 2, 2011, Laura Penn, the executive director of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, confirmed rumors of the ongoing dispute between Taymor and the show's producers about director's fees that Taymor has not received from the production. In a Hollywood Reporter piece from November 9, 2011 detailing the lawsuit, as a co-bookwriter for the musical Taymor is looking to stop Spider-Man from using copyrighted elements of the original production in the newly-adapted version and subsequent licensing without approval as outlined in her Author deal memo.
In 1953, when Frida Kahlo had her first solo exhibition in Mexico (the only one held in her native country during her lifetime), a local critic wrote: ‘It is impossible to separate the life and work of this extraordinary person. Her paintings are her biography.’ This observation serves to explain both why her work is so different from that of her contemporaries, the Mexican Muralists, and why she has since become a feminist icon.

Kahlo was born in Mexico City in 1907, the third daughter of Guillermo and Matilda Kahlo. Her father was a photographer of Hungarian Jewish descent, who had been born in Germany; her mother was Spanish and Native American. Her life was to be a long series of physical traumas, and the first of these came early. At the age of six she was stricken with polio, which left her with a limp. In childhood, she was nevertheless a fearless tomboy, and this made Frida her father’s favourite. He had advanced ideas about her education, and in 1922 she entered the Preparatoria (National Preparatory School), the most prestigious educational institution in Mexico, which had only just begun to admit girls. She was one of only thirty-five girls out of two thousand students.

It was there that she met her husband-to-be, Diego Rivera, who had recently returned home from France, and who had been commissioned to paint a mural there. Kahlo was attracted to him, and not knowing quite how to deal with the emotions she felt, expressed them by teasing him, playing practical jokes, and by trying to excite the jealousy of the painter's wife, Lupe Marin.

In 1925, Kahlo suffered the serious accident which was to set the pattern for much of the rest of her life. She was travelling in a bus which collided with a tramcar, and suffered serious injuries to her right leg and pelvis. The accident made it impossible for her to have children, though it was to be many years before she accepted this. It also meant that she faced a lifelong battle against pain. In 1926, during her convalescence, she painted her first self-portrait, the beginning of a long series in which she charted the events of her life and her emotional reactions to them.

She met Rivera again in 1928, through her friendship with the photographer and revolutionary Tina Modotti. Rivera's marriage had just disintegrated, and the two found that they had much in common, not least from a political point of view, since both were now communist militants. They married in August 1929. Kahlo was later to say: 'I suffered two grave accidents in my life. One in which a streetcar knocked me down... The other accident is Diego.'

The political climate in Mexico was deteriorating for those with left-wing sympathies, thanks to the reactionary Calles government, and the mural-painting programme initiated by the great Minister of Education Jose Vasconcelos had ground to a halt. But Rivera's artistic reputation was expanding rapidly in the United States. In 1930, the couple left for San Francisco; then, after a brief return to Mexico, they went to New York in 1931 for the Rivera retrospective organized by the Museum of Modern Art. Kahlo, at this stage, was regarded chiefly as a charming appendage to a famous husband, but the situation was soon to change. In 1932 Rivera was commissioned to paint a major series of murals for the Detroit Museum, and here Kahlo suffered a miscarriage. While recovering, she painted Miscarriage in Detroit, the first of her truly penetrating self-portraits. The style she evolved was entirely unlike that of her husband, being based on Mexican folk art and in particular on the small votive pictures known as retablos, which the pious dedicated in Mexican churches. Rivera's reaction to his wife's work was, however, both perceptive and generous:

Frida began work on a series of masterpieces which had no precedent in the history of art - paintings which exalted the feminine quality of truth, reality, cruelty and suffering. Never before had a woman put such agonized poetry on canvas as Frida did at this time in Detroit.
Kahlo, however, pretended not to consider her work important. As her biographer Hayden Herrera notes, 'she preferred to be seen as a beguiling personality rather than as a painter.' From Detroit they went once again to New York, where Rivera had been commissioned to paint a mural in the Rockefeller Center. The commission erupted into an enormous scandal, when the patron ordered the half-completed work destroyed because of the political imagery Rivera insisted on including. But Rivera lingered in the United States, which he loved and Kahlo now loathed. When they finally returned to Mexico in 1935, Rivera embarked on an affair with Kahlo's younger sister Cristina. Though they finally made up their quarrel, this incident marked a turning point in their relationship. Rivera had never been faithful to any woman; Kahlo now embarked on a series of affairs with both men and women which were to continue for the rest of her life. Rivera tolerated her lesbian relationships better than he did the heterosexual ones, which made him violently jealous. One of Kahlo's more serious early love affairs was with the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, now being hounded by his triumphant rival Stalin, and who had been offered refuge in Mexico in 1937 on Rivera's initiative. Another visitor to Mexico at this time, one who would gladly have had a love affair with Kahlo but for the fact that she was not attracted to him, was the leading figure of the Surrealist Group, André Breton. Breton arrived in 1938 and was enchanted with Mexico, which he found to be a 'naturally surrealist' country, and with Kahlo's painting. Partly through his initiative, she was offered a show at the fashionable Julian Levy Gallery in New York later in 1938, and Breton himself wrote a rhetorical catalogue preface. The show was a triumph, and about half the paintings were sold. In 1939, Breton suggested a show in Paris, and offered to arrange it. Kahlo, who spoke no French, arrived in France to find that Breton had not even bothered to get her work out of customs.

The enterprise was finally rescued by Marcel Duchamp, and the show opened about six weeks late. It was not a financial success, but the reviews were good, and the Louvre bought a picture for the Jeu de Paume. Kahlo also won praise from Kandinsky and Picasso. She had, however, conceived a violent dislike for what she called 'this bunch of coocoo lunatic sons of bitches of surrealists.' She did not renounce Surrealism immediately. in January 1940, for example, she was a participant (with Rivera) in the International Exhibition of Surrealism held in Mexico City. Later, she was to be vehement in her denials that she had ever been a true Surrealist. 'They thought I was a Surrealist,' she said, 'but I wasn't. I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.' Early in 1940, for motives which are still somewhat mysterious, Kahlo and Rivera divorced, though they continued to make public appearances together. In May, after the first attempt on Trotsky's life, led by the painter Siqueiros, Rivera thought it prudent to leave for San Francisco. After the second, and successful attempt, Kahlo, who had been a friend of Trotsky's assassin, was questioned by the police. She decided to leave Mexico for a while, and in September she joined her ex-husband. Less than two months later, while they were still in the United States, they remarried. One reason seems to have been Rivera's recognition that Kahlo's health would inexorably deteriorate, and that she needed someone to look after her.

Her health, never at any time robust, grew visibly worse from about 1944 onwards, and Kahlo underwent the first many operations on her spine and her crippled foot. Authorities on her life and work have questioned whether all these operations were really necessary, or whether they were in fact a way of holding Rivera's attention in the face of his numerous affairs with other women. In Kahlo's case, her physical and psychological sufferings were always linked. in early 1950, her physical state reached a crisis, and she had to go into hospital in Mexico City, where she remained for a year.

During the period after her remarriage, her artistic
reputation continued to grow, though at first more rapidly in the United States than in Mexico itself. She was included in prestigious group shows in the Museum of Modern Art, the Boston Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1946, however, she received a Mexican government fellowship, and in the same year an official prize on the occasion of the Annual National Exhibition. She also took up teaching at the new experimental art school ‘La Esmeralda’, and, despite her unconventional methods, proved an inspiration to her students. After her return home from hospital, Kahlo became an increasingly fervent and impassioned Communist. Rivera had been expelled from the Party, which was reluctant to receive him back, both because of his links with the Mexican government of the day, and because of his association with Trotsky. Kahlo boasted: ‘I was a member of the Party before I met Diego and I think I am a better Communist than he is or ever will be.’

While the 1940s had seen her produce some of her finest work, her paintings now became more clumsy and chaotic, thanks to the joint effects of pain, drugs and drink. Despite this, in 1953 she was offered her first solo show in Mexico itself - which was to be the only such show held in her own lifetime. It took place at the fashionable Galeria de Arte Contemporaneo in the Zona Rosa of Mexico City. At first it seemed that Kahlo would be too ill to attend, but she sent her richly decorated fourposter bed ahead of her, arrived by ambulance, and was carried into the gallery on a stretcher. The private view was a triumphal occasion.

In the same year, Kahlo, threatened by gangrene, had her right leg amputated below the knee. It was a tremendous blow to someone who had invested so much in the elaboration of her own self image. She learned to walk again with an artificial limb, and even (briefly and with the help of pain-killing drugs) danced at celebrations with friends. But the end was close. In July 1954, she made her last public appearance, when she participated in a Communist demonstration against the overthrow of the left-wing Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz. Soon afterwards, she died in her sleep, apparently as the result of an embolism, though there was a suspicion among those close to her that she had found a way to commit suicide. Her last diary entry read: ‘I hope the end is joyful - and I hope never to come back - Frida.’

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**Frida (from Wikipedia)**

Frida is a 2002 biographical film which depicts the professional and private life of the surrealist Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. It stars Salma Hayek in her Academy Award nominated portrayal as Kahlo and Alfred Molina as her husband, Diego Rivera.

The movie was adapted by Clancy Sigal, Diane Lake, Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas and Edward Norton (uncredited) from the book Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo by Hayden Herrera. It was directed by Julie Taymor. It won Oscars for Best Makeup and Best Original Music Score (recipient: Elliot Goldenthal).

**Plot**

Frida begins with the traumatic accident Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek) suffered at the age of 18 when a car trolley collided with a bus she was riding. She is impaled by a metal pole and the injuries she sustained plague her for the rest of her life. To help her through convalescence, her father brings her a canvas upon which to start painting. Throughout the film, a scene starts as a painting, then slowly dissolves into a live-action scene with actors.

Frida also details the artist's dysfunctional relationship with the muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina). When Rivera proposes to Kahlo, she tells him she expects from him loyalty if not fidelity. Diego's appraisal of her painting ability is one of the reasons that she continues to paint. Throughout the marriage, Rivera cheats on her with a wide array of women, while the bisexual Kahlo takes on male and female lovers.

The two travel to New York City so that he may paint the mural Man at the Crossroads at the Rockefeller Center. While in the United States, Kahlo suffers a miscarriage, and her mother dies in Mexico. Rivera refuses to compromise his communist vision of the work to the needs of the patron, Nelson Rockefeller (Edward Norton); as a result, the mural is destroyed. The pair return to Mexico, with Rivera the more reluctant of the two.

Kahlo's sister Cristina moves in with the two at their San Ángel studio home to work as Rivera's assistant. Soon afterward, Kahlo discovers that Rivera is having an affair with her sister. She leaves him, and subsequently sinks into alcoholism. The couple reunite when he asks her to welcome and house Leon Trotsky (Geoffrey Rush), who has been granted political asylum in Mexico. She and Trotsky begin an affair, which forces the married Trotsky to leave the safety of his Coyoaçán home.
Kahlo leaves for Paris after Diego realizes she was unfaithful to him with Trotsky. When she returns to Mexico, he asks for a divorce. Soon afterwards, Trotsky is murdered in Mexico City. Rivera is temporarily a suspect, and Kahlo is incarcerated in his place when he is not found. Rivera helps get her released.

Kahlo has her toes removed when they become gangrenous. Rivera asks her to remarry him, and she agrees. Her health worsens, including the amputation of a leg, and she ultimately dies after finally having a solo exhibition of her paintings in Mexico.

Development
The film version of Frida Kahlo's life was initially championed by Nancy Hardin, a former book editor and Hollywood-based literary agent, turned early "female studio executive", who, in the mid-1980s wished to "make the transition to independent producing." Learning of Hayden Herrera's biography of Kahlo, Hardin saw Kahlo's life as very contemporary, her "story... an emblematic tale for women torn between marriage and career." Optioning the book in 1988, Hardin "tried to sell it as an epic love story in the tradition of Out of Africa, attracting tentative interest from actresses such as Meryl Streep and Jessica Lange, but rejection from the film studios. As Kahlo's art gained prominence, however ("[i]n May 1990 one of Kahlo's self-portraits sold at Sotheby's for $1.5 million, the highest price ever paid at auction for a Latin American painting"), Madonna "announced her plans to star in a film based on Frida's life", and Robert De Niro's Tribeca Productions reportedly "envisioned a joint biography of Rivera and Kahlo."

In the spring of 1991, director Luis Valdez began production on a New Line feature about Frida Kahlo starring Laura San Giacomo and Ofelia Medina both playing the portraitist. Raúl Juliá was cast as Diego Rivera, but his death further delayed the movie. At the same time, Hardin approached HBO, and with "rising young development executive and producer" Lizz Speed (a former assistant to Sherry Lansing) intended to make a TVM, hopeful that Brian Gibson (director of "What's Love Got to Do With It, the story of Tina Turner" and The Josephine Baker Story) would direct. Casting difficulties proved insurmountable, but Speed joined Hardin in advocating the project, and after four years in development, the two took the project from HBO to Trimark and producer Jay Polstein (with assistant Darlene Caamaño). At Trimark, Salma Hayek became interested in the role, having "been fascinated by Kahlo's work from the time she was 13 or 14" - although not immediately a fan:

"At that age I did not like her work... I found it ugly and grotesque. But something intrigued me, and the more I learned, the more I started to appreciate her work. There was a lot of passion and depth. Some people see only pain, but I also see irony and humor. I think what draws me to her is what Diego saw in her. She was a fighter. Many things could have diminished her spirit, like the accident or Diego's infidelities. But she wasn't crushed by anything." 

Hayek was so set on acting the role that she sought out Dolores Olmedo Patino, longtime-lover of Diego Rivera, and (after his death) administrator to the rights of Frida and Rivera's art, which Rivera had "willed... to the Mexican people", bequeath[ing] the trust to Olmedo. Salma Hayek personally secured access to Kahlo's paintings from her, and began to assemble a supporting cast, approaching Alfred Molina for the role of Rivera in 1998. According to Molina, "She turned up backstage [of the Broadway play 'Art'] rather sheepishly and asked if I would like to play Diego". Molina went on to gain 35 pounds to play Rivera.

When producer Polstein left Trimark, however, the production faltered again, and Hayek approached Harvey Weinstein and Miramax, and the company purchased the film...
from Trimark; Julie Taymor came onto the project as Director. Meanwhile, in August 2000 it was announced that Jennifer Lopez would star in Valdez's take on the story, The Two Fridas, by then being produced by American Zoetrope. Nonetheless, it was Hayek and Miramax who began production in Spring, 2001 on what was to become simply titled Frida.

**Filming**

 Filming took place from April 7 through June 2001 and was shot entirely in Mexico.

 Among the on location places shot were three UNESCO world heritage sites: Teotihuacan, Xochimilco, and Puebla's historic centre. Other on location sites include Rivera and Kahlo's Juan O'Gorman-designed San Ángel studio house and the San Idelfonso National Preparatory School. Replicas of the Casa Azul (Kahlo's Coyoacán house) and the RCA Building's lobby were built at Churubusco Studios in Mexico City and shot in Stage 4 there.

 For scenes depicting Diego completing a mural, crew members stretched a canvas across a scaffold placed in front of the painter's actual artwork. This "makeshift 'mural'" included sketched outlines and painted portions. The optical "illusion" of a work in progress was achieved through the canvas "flattened" by a camera shooting from a distance and therefore "blending" the edges into the fixed mural.

 Salma Hayek wore over fifty costumes as Frida. Some pieces were purchased from street vendors in Mexico City.

 **Bill Moyers' interview with Julie Taymor, 10/25/02:**

 MOYERS: Every now and then a movie comes along that truly changes how we see the world or shows us something about the world we had never quite seen before. Such a movie opens this weekend in New York and Los Angeles, and next Friday across the country. The name of this movie is FRIDA for the artist Frida Kahlo. She was hardly known outside her native Mexico when she died in 1954. But today her paintings bring record bids at auction.

 More than 100 books have been written about her in Spanish and English, and she's the first Latin woman to be honored on a United States postage stamp.

 Quíte a remarkable celebrity for someone who lived in constant pain after an accident that almost killed her when she was a girl in school. Here's one of the many vivid scenes in FRIDA, starring Salma Hayek.

 That scene, this movie, FRIDA, was directed by Julie Taymor. She won two Tony awards for the LION KING on Broadway. It was her film version of Shakespeare's TITUS ANDRONICUS, all about blood feuds and vengeance, that prompted me to interview her last year after the massacre on September 11.

 Julie Taymor is back this evening. And I welcome you to NOW.

 TAYMOR: Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

 MOYERS: What was there about the life of this woman that made you want to tell her story?

 TAYMOR: Well, her life seemed to transcend her pain, both her this was a woman who shouldn't have lived after this horrific accident that skewed her. And yet she was in bed for two years, her father put a mirror under the canopy of the bed, and she started to paint herself. And through her life she seemed to be able to make... To create art out of the worst circumstances. And that's an incredibly inspiring story.

 On top of that, it's an amazing romance, the rockiest romance I've ever come across, ever, between her and Diego Rivera.

 MOYERS: And the most unlikely.

 TAYMOR: Oh, it's unbelievable. He was 250, 300 pounds; she was 5'2". He was big. Their differences were huge. He was a very famous painter at the time, hugely famous, and phenomenally famous for womanizing. And she knew it when she married him.

 So you had infidelities all over the place, and yet this woman loved Diego. And it was a tremendous relationship, divorce, come together, fall apart.

 MOYERS: She was a revolutionary in so many ways: artistically, politically, sexually. What did you identify with her as a woman?

 TAYMOR: Well, this woman painted not to make money. Not that I haven't made money. But she painted what she painted because she was passionate about it. She didn't care at all if people bought her paintings. As she said, she painted her reality.

 MOYERS: And she married a huge... a hundred fellow artists who lived in constant pain after an accident that almost killed her when she was a girl in school. Here's one of the many vivid scenes in FRIDA, starring Salma Hayek.

 I find that I make as an artist the kind of choices that I have to be impassioned about. I'm not going to spend two years on a film or four years on an opera if I don't feel like I can put my own self into it. That doesn't mean it has to be about myself. That's a difference.

 Frida painted her own reality, her life. I'm a director and I paint many other people... Other people's realities. But I do...
have to invest in it. And the other thing that I found compelling is that Elliot Goldenthal, who did the score...

MOYERS: The music.

TAYMOR: ...We have a long 20-year collaboration. And I love that Diego and Frida were these incredible artists who supported each other in their work, in their art.

MOYERS: He is your significant other.

TAYMOR: Oh, yes. Yes.

MOYERS: For 20 years?

TAYMOR: Twenty happily unmarried years.

MOYERS: So there was more to her than being an artist. I mean, there was a... You could identify with her.

TAYMOR: No, I like that, but she got... She also really wanted to have a family and children and she had no luck at that either with miscarriages and because of her accident. The body was not capable.

MOYERS: She could easily have been a victim. Yet as I said in the opening in the 1980s there was this explosion of interest in her. Why do so many women see in her the hero's journey?

TAYMOR: Well, I think there's a difference between how she was perceived in the '80s and how we are trying to deal with her now. Because she was used as a... Whatever the word feminist means to you, she was used as an icon of pain and suffering, really a woman who had tremendous abuse from her husband and survived, as I said, these accidents.

But I don't think that really is the heart of what Frida is. I think now what we can see as women is a woman who was outrageous, unique, talented, single minded, tenacious, and very feminine. Very caught up with her man. Very vulnerable. Very obsessive about her love for her guy.

So there was this... There is, this incredible balance that's attractive to women and to men I think who see this story, of someone who can do both, where you didn't have to say, "I'm a woman, so I'm going to be independent, and I don't need you as a male, and I can stand on my own." There's that. I mean, that's fine.

But I also think that Frida, she knew how to lay a table, she knew how to put flowers in her hair. That's mysterious about her is her gender bending, her bisexuality, her ability to be both macabre, grotesque and exquisitely beautiful, sublimely beautiful.

MOYERS: Let me show the audience one of the many powerful scenes in the movie.

SCENE FROM FILM: Get out! Get out! Get out!

MOYERS: I'm chilled every time I see that.

TAYMOR: Why?

MOYERS: I do not know. I was going to ask you why. Why is the haircutting so significant?

TAYMOR: Well, that particular scene happens after Diego has done the ultimate act of betrayal: he's made love with Frida's sister. And she leaves him. Frida leaves him.

And she... So much of Frida was about her physically, her hair, her braids, her clothes. So she cuts her hair off at that moment. She plays with that other side of her which is the masculine side of her.

But that particular shot which is Salma Hayek in front of the mirror, completely painted. We painted her face. We painted her clothing. We forced perspective. When you talk about the theater, that is a forced perspective set. There's nothing computer generated in this at all. This is almost totally theatrical.

You use motion control, which means your camera moves once with the real Salma here, then you do the same action again with there, and you can then put them together.

But it's quite shocking to people because it looks like a two dimensional painting for a moment, and then you feel that it's a human being coming alive.

MOYERS: I'm chilled I think because of that and chilled because suddenly as you talk I think of... I'm seeing the melancholy. I mean, feeling the melancholy, the cut hair, the something lost, something gone, something that she loved, she shears. And then suddenly this figure comes alive for a brief moment and then lapses into the most utmost posture of despair and melancholy.

TAYMOR: And it's a little, little gesture. I was talking about this earlier today. That's a little teeny gesture, just the collapse. It's so subtle just to go, "Oh, my god, she's alive." You know.

MOYERS: Let's look at that scene when for the first time Diego is about to seduce her or she's about to seduce him.

TAYMOR: Exactly.

FRIDA: What is this?

DIEGO: Well, the benefits of being party leader, you can arrange for the drinking to be done close to home.

FRIDA: If you think I'm going to sleep with you just because you've taken me under your wing, you're wrong.

DIEGO: Me? I was painting murals and womanizing in peace when you came along. I have a proposal. We
will not sleep together. We will solemnly swear right here, right now that we will be friends only.

FRIDA: Fine. Did you arrange for that?
DIEGO: Cost me a fortune.
MOYERS: I wasn't prepared for the light to come on. I loved that, it was quite a touch.
TAYMOR: Yes. Yes. I think that's part of the myth of stories.

MOYERS: Later they do marry. She takes him on knowing that he is a compulsive womanizer. Why did she do that? You studied her life. Why did she do that?
TAYMOR: She just thought he was worth it. She just thought it was more bigger than that.

Also we have a scene and I think it's the crux of the movie, really, which is, what is the fine line between fidelity and loyalty? When she... When he proposes to her she... He says he can't be faithful. And she thinks about it. He says, he's physiologically incapable of fidelity.

And she thinks about it and she says, "can you be loyal?" And he says, "to you, always." Well, what is the difference?

MOYERS: My favorite line in the movie is after they've been divorced and they've been separated, they've been apart. They've been in California. He comes back and she says to him why? And he says because I miss us.

TAYMOR: Us.
MOYERS: And Joseph Campbell once said, you know, "That the commitment is to the relationship in a marriage."
TAYMOR: That's true.
MOYERS: And he missed whatever they became together.

There's a whole feeling that this... These two became an item, even in the public eye, even in a social or celebrity circle, they were a unique couple.

And I don't think that that's probably what he meant, but obviously she gave him something that he needed to be with.
MOYERS: His art is overtly political; hers is very, very personal.
TAYMOR: From the beginning of her painting she was her own subject. She just stayed on that. That's what she could paint. She painted, as she said, her inner reality. She painted from inside. He painted the outside.
With the falling gold dust and the falling glass and the falling oranges, there’s also that pipe there that we know later is going to enter her back and vagina and means she'll never have children. You don't see that act.

TAYMOR: No.

MOYERS: You grope with the consequences of violence not with the act itself.

TAYMOR: Well, I learned from Shakespeare about that. I learned.

MOYERS: Good mentor.

TAYMOR: Yes, I did. And I think that people's imaginations are richer sometimes than the reality. And also the reality, if you show the act, you have the danger of putting the audience off so they can't enter into it.

We always write stories of tragedies because that's how we reach our human depth. How we get to the other side of it. We look at the cruelty, the darkness and horrific events that happened in our life whether it be a miscarriage or a husband who is not faithful. Then you find this ability to transcend. And that is called the passion, like the passion of Christ. You could call this the passion of Frida Kahlo, in a way.

When I talk about passion, and I'm not a religious person, but I absolutely am drawn and attracted to the power of religious art because it gets at that most extreme emotion of the human experience.

MOYERS: Excuse me, I have to tell you that I think you are one of the most religious people I see working in the...

TAYMOR: Well, yes, but not an organized religion.

MOYERS: No, no, not...doctrinaire. But the experience.

TAYMOR: No, I agree with you. I believe in it profoundly.

MOYERS: What I sense in you as a seeker, a pilgrim, soldier, whatever. You're a seeker.

TAYMOR: I am often interested in the story of the outsider. You know I lived in Indonesia for many years.

MOYERS: What happened to you in Indonesia.

TAYMOR: This is probably it for me. This is the story that moves me the most. I was there for two years and I was planning to stay longer and start a theater company. I went to Bali to a remote village by a volcanic mountain on the lake. They were having a ceremony that only happens only every 10 years for the young men. I wanted to be alone.

I was listening to this music and all of a sudden out of the darkness I could see glints of mirrors and 30 or 40 old men in full warrior costume—there was nobody in this village square. I was alone. They couldn't see me in the shadows. They came out with these spears and they started to dance. They did, I don't know, it felt like an eternity but probably a half hour dance. With these voices coming out of them. And they danced to nobody. Right after that, they and I went oh, my God. The first man came out and they were performing for God. Now God can mean whatever you want it to mean. But for me, I understood it so totally. The detail on the costumes. They didn't care if someone was paying tickets, writing reviews. They didn't care if an audience was watching. They did it from the inside to the outside. And from the outside to the in. And that profoundly moved me then.

MOYERS: How did you see the world differently after you were in Indonesia?

TAYMOR: Well I understood really the power of art to transform. I think transformation become the main word in my life.

Transformation because you don't want to just put a mirror in front of people and say, here, look at yourself. What do you see? You want to have a skewed mirror. You want a mirror that says you didn't know you could see the back of your head. You didn't know that you could amount cubistic see almost all the same aspects at the same time. It allows human beings to step out of their lives and to revisit it and maybe find something different about it.

I think that's why travel was so important to me. I did it at a really young age, because you go outside and then you look at your own country, your own culture, completely differently.

I remember back then I used to say that arts were talked about in the arts and leisure page. Now, why would it be arts and leisure? Why do we think that arts are leisure? Why isn't it arts and science or arts and the most important thing in your life?

I think that art has become a big scarlet letter in our culture. It's a big "A." And it says, you are an elitist, you're effete, or whatever those things...do you know what I mean? It means you don't connect. And I don't believe that. I think we've patronized our audiences long enough.

You can do things that would bring people to another place and still get someone on a very daily mundane moving level but you don't have to separate art from the masses.

MOYERS: Thank you very much, Julie Taymor, for being with us tonight.

TAYMOR: Thank you so much.
SPRING 2012 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXIV (TENTATIVE)

Jan 17 Victor Sjörostöm, *The Phantom Carriage* 1921
Jan 24 William A. Wellman, *The Public Enemy* 1931
    Jan 31 Merian C. Cooper, *King Kong* 1933
Feb 7 Ernst Lubitsch, *To Be or Not to Be*, 1942
    Feb 14 Luchino Visconti, *Senso* 1954
Feb 21 Stanley Kubrick, *Paths of Glory* 1957
    Feb 29 Sidney Lumet, *12 Angry Men* 1957
    Mar 13 spring break
Mar 20 Clint Eastwood, *The Outlaw Josey Wales* 1975
    Mar 27 John Woo, *The Killer* 1989
    Apr 10 Terrence Malick, *Thin Red Line* 1998
    Apr 17 Wong Kar Wei 2046, 2004
Apr 24 Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* 2008

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The Buffalo Film Seminars are presented by the Market Arcade Film & Arts Center
    and State University of New York at Buffalo
With support from the Robert and Patricia Colby Foundation and the Buffalo News