



# **María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art (Latin American and Caribbean Arts and Culture Publication In)**

*Nancy Deffebach*

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María Izquierdo (1902–1955) and Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) were the first two Mexican women artists to achieve international recognition. During the height of the Mexican muralist movement, they established successful careers as easel painters and created work that has become an integral part of Mexican modernism. Although the iconic Kahlo is now more famous, the two artists had comparable reputations during their lives. Both were regularly included in major exhibitions of Mexican art, and they were invariably the only women chosen for the most important professional activities and honors.

In a deeply informed study that prioritizes critical analysis over biographical interpretation, Nancy Deffebach places Kahlo's and Izquierdo's oeuvres in their cultural context, examining the ways in which the artists participated in the national and artistic discourses of postrevolutionary Mexico. Through iconographic analysis of paintings and themes within each artist's oeuvre, Deffebach discusses how the artists engaged intellectually with the issues and ideas of their era, especially Mexican national identity and the role of women in society. In a time when Mexican artistic and national discourses associated the nation with masculinity, Izquierdo and Kahlo created images of women that deconstructed gender roles, critiqued the status quo, and presented more empowering alternatives for women. Deffebach demonstrates that, paradoxically, Kahlo and Izquierdo became the most successful Mexican women artists of the modernist period while most directly challenging the prevailing ideas about gender and what constitutes important art.

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