

# Phila. museum opens Kahlo exhibit

By Calista Condo  
Staff Writer

The Philadelphia Museum of Art continues to hold exhibitions of extremely influential and phenomenal artists. On February 20, the Frida Kahlo exhibit opened to celebrate the 100th birthday of the famous Mexican artist.

Kahlo was born in Mexico and she lived a life of hardship as well as privilege, having been born to a wealthy photographer; the Photographer of the (Mexican) Nation, as her father was called. When she was a young girl she became ill with polio and was forever crippled in one leg, causing her to walk with a limp and be teased by her peers.

Later, in her teenage life, she was in a trolley accident that broke her spine in three places and shattered her pelvis, leaving her with no chance of having children, causing her to have over 10 different surgeries, and confining her to her bed in a complete body cast over and over again throughout her life. This also caused her to begin painting.

As an adult she encountered a problematic marriage and divorce to Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Each tragedy in her life, which only fueled her will to live, is expressed in every piece of art.

Her popularity stems from every detail of her personal life being shared with her audience.

Her work is simply genuine.

The exhibit is a chronological journey through Kahlo's artistic life. Audio tours are free and will inform you in much greater detail of Kahlo's life and art. The further you wind through the exhibit, the more surreal and expressive her works and life become. For a self-taught artist, Kahlo seems extremely artistically and creatively in tune. By creating a style all her own, Kahlo is able to explain her life and trials through her art. Every piece is saturated in color and vibrancy. The works come alive when you see them in person; the colors, intense; the details, flawlessly intricate. The exhibit exposes the symbolism, the meaning, and the story behind each work; showing viewers that all 200 pieces Kahlo created through-



Artwork courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo's "Self Portrait" (pictured above) is among the works on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art until May 18.

out her lifetime were created thoroughly, and were meditated creations of her very conscious mind. With the inclusion of numerous photographs and family collections, her life and art overwhelm and engulf the viewer.

Even the simplest portraits have wonderful intensity, meaning and creativity within them. By allowing the viewer to experience the inner workings of her mind and her life so vividly, Kahlo forces them to look at their own lives, their own minds, and their own pain.

It's impossible to ignore Kahlo's cultural, political, and sexual views. Her works show her fearlessness in expressing her opinions along with her physical and psychological tragedies. She never shied away from any topic, or feeling she had. Never afraid of the outcome, or repercussions, Kahlo pushed buttons with her po-

litical and somewhat feminist arguments that she placed in her paintings.

She addresses her own significant battles with the stereotypical societal norms placed on women, while being in love with a womanizing husband who cheated on her repeatedly. She is always natural, and completely beautiful in her own skin. Within her portraits, Kahlo indulged in every flaw and unconventional bit of beauty that she had. She was her favorite subject, not because she was vain, but rather because she knew her lonely self best and wanted to learn about and show the intricacies of her life.

Her works are an examination of her existence.

Even growing up in Mexico and having such a rich culture left room for Kahlo to continuously struggled with her identity. She loved her Mexican heritage, but

her father, whom she also loved deeply, was German making her only half of an identity. Although she had an intact family, Kahlo always felt lonely and anxious about belonging. This mainly happened because she never had a bond with her mother, who could not breastfeed or care for Kahlo as a baby because she was ill.

Her mother also had a miscarriage of her only son right before Kahlo, possibly causing resentment to the child that was born. Her sisters teased her and told her she was found in the trash and when she became ill with polio, the idea that she did not belong was made stronger in her mind. She became introverted, and, in her own words, "lonely."

Clinging to her Mexican culture and her husband later on in life, would give her a place and identity she could flourish in. Her works exude the Mexican life and culture with in her own life. They blend, almost becoming synonymous. Even her still lifes are descriptive of her time on earth, representing Mexican fruit, torn and cut, with their bloody insides exposed and dripping, expressing her Mexican identity and her dying body.

Sometimes in art the artist is not aware of their subconscious and use their art as tool to explore the deepest parts of the mind. Kahlo's exploration was deliberate and conscious. Although she is the daughter of surrealism, Kahlo's works are by all accounts autobiographies. They are not dreams but her all too real and painful truths.

Every person has a story to tell, a journey through life, and decisions to make. Kahlo used her art as her deepest confidant, her diary locked and hidden under the bed. This is what makes her surrealist art realist and true, relatable and touching. Her life and works educate and allow us to realize that self-exploration is a painful but beautiful process that may just help us loose our apathetic spirits and become passionate about life, love and everything in between.

The Frida Kahlo Exhibit will run until May 18. Tickets, with a valid student ID, are \$20 and include general admission to the rest of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. For more information visit [www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org)

## 'Charlie Bartlett,' a comedy with meaning

By Rebecca Grites  
Columnist

Take it from me – I loathe the commercial trailers for this film, hocking it next to the likes of "Juno" because it has "a whole lot of heart." "Charlie Bartlett" is proof that a film can be enjoyable, meaningful and full of "heart" without shoving the indie/artsy/too-cool-for-school vibe down the viewer's throats.

The plot is sweet, simple and reminiscent of a modern-day Ferris Bueller, as a young boy enters high school at the ripe age of 17 and realizes he's a loser. Little does he know, everyone in high school is really a loser – or more correctly – needs a friend. Charlie has something special that helps each of his colleagues develop into something they truly want to be; Charlie Bartlett listens and finds solutions. Though, some of his solutions involve medication, psychiatrics ultimately win out in this adorable teen-age bildungsroman.

Charlie Bartlett, played by the fresh-faced Anton Yelchin, is the quirky oddball that in feature films is beat up by the punks and jocks, but in reality, would be swooned over for his good looks and unavoidable charm. Yelchin plays the part to a "T." Following suit with the likes of Michael Cera, Yelchin provides an adorable portrayal of a good kid who repeatedly gets in trouble for doing what he believes in, and of course, finds love in the process.



from [rottentomatoes.com](http://rottentomatoes.com)  
Charlie Bartlett, played by Anton Yelchin and Charlie's mother, played by Hope Davis exemplify the oddities in today's world of youth and parents in "Charlie Bartlett."

Part of the beauty of this film was the deep compatibility and believability in the romance between Yelchin and his character's girlfriend, Susan Gardner, played by Kat Dennings. Susan isn't just the first girl to give Charlie a chance, but she's also the principal's daughter, adding another layer to this highly textured teenage tale of angst, depression, family dysfunction and finding out who you truly are.

Hope Davis, who plays Charlie's mom, and Robert Downey Jr., who plays Principal Gardner, also give grade-A performances as the adult mirrors to the chil-

dren's mental and physical problems, as well as addictions. And no one can deny getting a kick out of hearing Robert Downey Jr. explain that there are more to life than drugs – ironic, to say the least.

Within every character in the film, there is a deeper layer and compatibility to human life, as we know it. No matter your age, sex or popularity status, everyone battles an internal beast and it takes a mentor like Charlie Bartlett to not only make the individual realize how to face that battle and move on, but to also bring it to the attention of the adults who aren't listening to them, but instead pumping them with pharmaceuticals.

"Charlie Bartlett" laid a heavy hand on the latest trend in psychotherapy of just handing out Ritalin and Xanax to kids who are too hyper, too sad or too stressed. As Charlie not only defeats the system by getting prescriptions for the pills his "clients" seem to need, he opens a controversial door of how easily cast aside deep emotional issues are in young adults, and that having a friend or given a chance to achieve a dream is really all someone needs to bounce back from the average mental lapse.

Aside from all the underlying motivations of director Jon Poll, "Charlie Bartlett" is a warm and touching story that deserves to be seen – if only for Charlie's hilarious rendition of "Yankee Doodle."

**GRADE:**  
**A-**