



BEYOND THE ICON: REFRAMING THE PERSPECTIVE ON FRIDA KAHLO

The Storytelling Exhibition Case of Museo Casa Kahlo

Reconnecting Audiences
with Frida Through Family
and Care

**ICOM COMMS Awards 2026
Best Storytelling Project**

**Museo Casa Kahlo
Mexico City, Mexico**

February 2024 – July 2026



How do you tell a new story about someone the whole world believes it already knows?

Everyone knows Frida Kahlo, but few know the family, relationships, and networks of care that shaped her life and artistic legacy. While her public image has become one of the most recognizable in the world, much of her story remains untold. This project presents the integrated storytelling strategy developed by *Museo Casa Kahlo* to invite audiences to rediscover Frida through a new perspective—one that places family, everyday life, community, and care at the heart of the narrative. Through a consistent communication strategy spanning exhibitions, public programmes, guided mediation, and digital platforms, the museum has transformed the way visitors experience and talk about one of the world's most celebrated women.

The PROBLEM

How do you tell a new story about someone the world believes it already knows?

For decades, the public narrative surrounding Frida Kahlo has largely mythologized her life, placing suffering, personal tragedy, and her relationship with Diego Rivera at its center. Reinforced through media, film, and popular culture, this perspective has made Frida one of the world's most recognizable artists while simultaneously reducing the complexity of her story.

Consequently, the recent opening of the *Museo Casa Kahlo*—a place that also belongs to the world of Frida Kahlo though focused on her family environment—faced the dual challenge of not only attracting visitors but also convincing them that more of her history still remained to be discovered. In order to overcome this challenge, it became essential to connect both with individuals who believed they thoroughly knew everything about Frida, as well as new generations whose interests varied and who had access to a wide range of cultural influences. Thereby rethinking the way in which a universal figure continues to reveal previously unknown aspects of her life to the public.

The challenge, therefore, was to shift away from the narrative of Frida that solely focused around the prism of suffering and myth, and instead focus on the connections that she herself forged throughout her everyday life, her family relationships, her community, and the bonds of affection that made Frida's life, artistic practices, and legacy what they are today.



The SOLUTION

How can storytelling transform the way audiences see Frida Kahlo?

Museo Casa Kahlo developed a holistic storytelling strategy founded on a very simple question:

Who was Frida when she stepped away from her public persona and went back to simply being a daughter, a sister, a teacher, a friend and a member of a family?

This answer was built by restoring the voices that had long remained in the background. Through previously unpublished correspondence, family photographs, original documents, and personal testimonies, the museum brings Guillermo Kahlo, Matilde Calderón —Frida's parents—, as well as her sisters—Matilde, Adriana, and Cristina—back into the narrative, revealing the network of affection and support that shaped both her personal life and artistic identity.



This narrative also highlights lesser-known aspects of the artist's life, such as her work as a teacher and the socially-oriented project known as *La Ayuda*, which transformed this house into a space that provided support for self-reliant mothers and families in vulnerable circumstances. By doing so, the museum presents a perspective in which care, education and community are just as valuable as artistic creation.



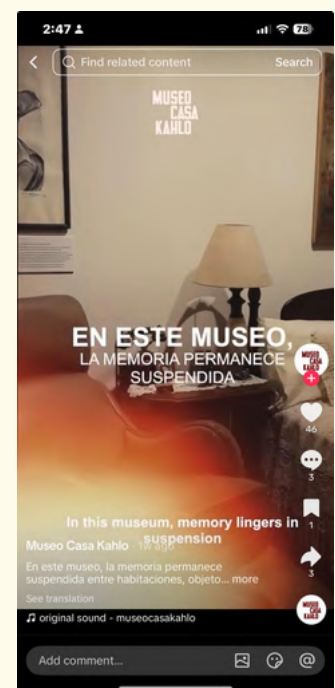
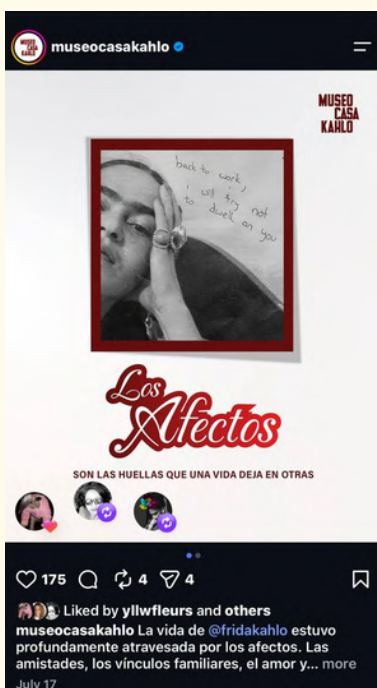
To make this story tangible, the storytelling unfolds through multiple interpretive layers. Audiovisual installations, animations, and interactive experiences, that invite visitors to explore Guillermo Kahlo's analogue photography process, the restoration of the family's kitchen murals, the basement, and Frida's bedroom, allowing audiences to experience the house as it was once lived in by the Kahlo family. The multisensory experience is further enriched through carefully selected aromas—such as grapefruit and the traditional *café de olla*—along with immersive soundscapes and dramatized readings of the family correspondence that bring visitors emotionally closer to the intimacy of the house.





Guided interpretation is another essential component of the strategy. Tours are offered in Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese, prioritizing dialogue over information delivery. Rather than focusing exclusively on biographical facts, mediators encourage conversations about family relationships, support networks, creative processes, and the broader social context that shaped Frida's life, creating a deeply personal and human-centered museum experience.

The museum's storytelling also extends far beyond the galleries. Its communication strategy maintains a consistent narrative across every audience touchpoint. Social media deliberately moves away from iconic imagery, famous quotes, and the familiar myths surrounding Frida Kahlo. Instead, it shares unpublished photographs, excerpts from family correspondence, behind-the-scenes research, overlooked historical episodes, and everyday moments from *La Casa Roja*. Rather than reinforcing the legend, the museum invites audiences to discover an unfamiliar Frida through curiosity, intimacy, and emotional connection.



This narrative extends through an interdisciplinary public programme that connects the Kahlo family's history with music, literature, and collective creativity through live performances, reading activities, collage workshops, and fanzine-making sessions, encouraging visitors to create and share stories of their own.

Finally, *Museo Casa Kahlo* established a volunteer programme that trains participants in museum mediation, accessibility, communication, and audience engagement, empowering them to become active storytellers themselves. In this way, storytelling evolves beyond the exhibition content and into a shared institutional practice that grows through every conversation between the museum and its communities.





The **RESULTS**

What happens when
the story changes?



The audience research carried out between October 2025 and July 2026 yielded both the results of the survey that was part of the annual museum statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (*INEGI*), along with the qualitative analysis collected from the museum's visitor book, located in the temporary exhibition room.

According to the 2025 museum statistics, 71% of visitors were women and 29% were men. International visitors represented 58% of total attendance, while 42% were Mexican nationals. Notably, 98% of the respondents were visiting *Museo Casa Kahlo* for the first time, while 65% reported that their visit had been planned in advance.

Visitors were also asked to rate how much they had been able to learn during their visit on a scale from 1 to 10. 63% chose the highest possible score, while the other 15% rated their learning experience as a score of 9. Overall, satisfaction levels were equally high, with 81% awarding the museum a perfect 10 and another 12% rating it as 9 out of 10.

Furthermore, beyond these quantitative indicators, the findings from the visitors' book suggest that this project not only has begun presenting to the public a new interpretation of Frida Kahlo, but it is also helping to shift the conversation that visitors have about her. Rather than leaving the museum discussing her relationship with Diego Rivera or her suffering, visitors leave the museum talking about her father, her sisters, her family's solidarity, the house as a nurturing space, and a profoundly humane Frida.

The purpose of the comment book, is to invite the visitor either to leave a spontaneous reflection or respond to a monthly question inspired by the museum's central themes. Here are some highlights among the comments received by national and international visitors:

"I loved discovering how Frida wrote to her family and the intimate bond she shared with her sisters."

"So happy and glad to have visited this special place. It reinforces the importance of family and encourages us to pursue innovative and extraordinary things."

"Being here alone made me think about my own family. I was deeply moved by the love within the Kahlo family and how it still resonates throughout this beautiful home."

"Beautiful storytelling. I especially appreciated the personal references to Frida and her family. I was deeply moved by the clothing, jewellery and family photographs. Well done!"

During March, visitors were invited to reflect on women's support networks—one of the museum's central narrative themes—with the question:

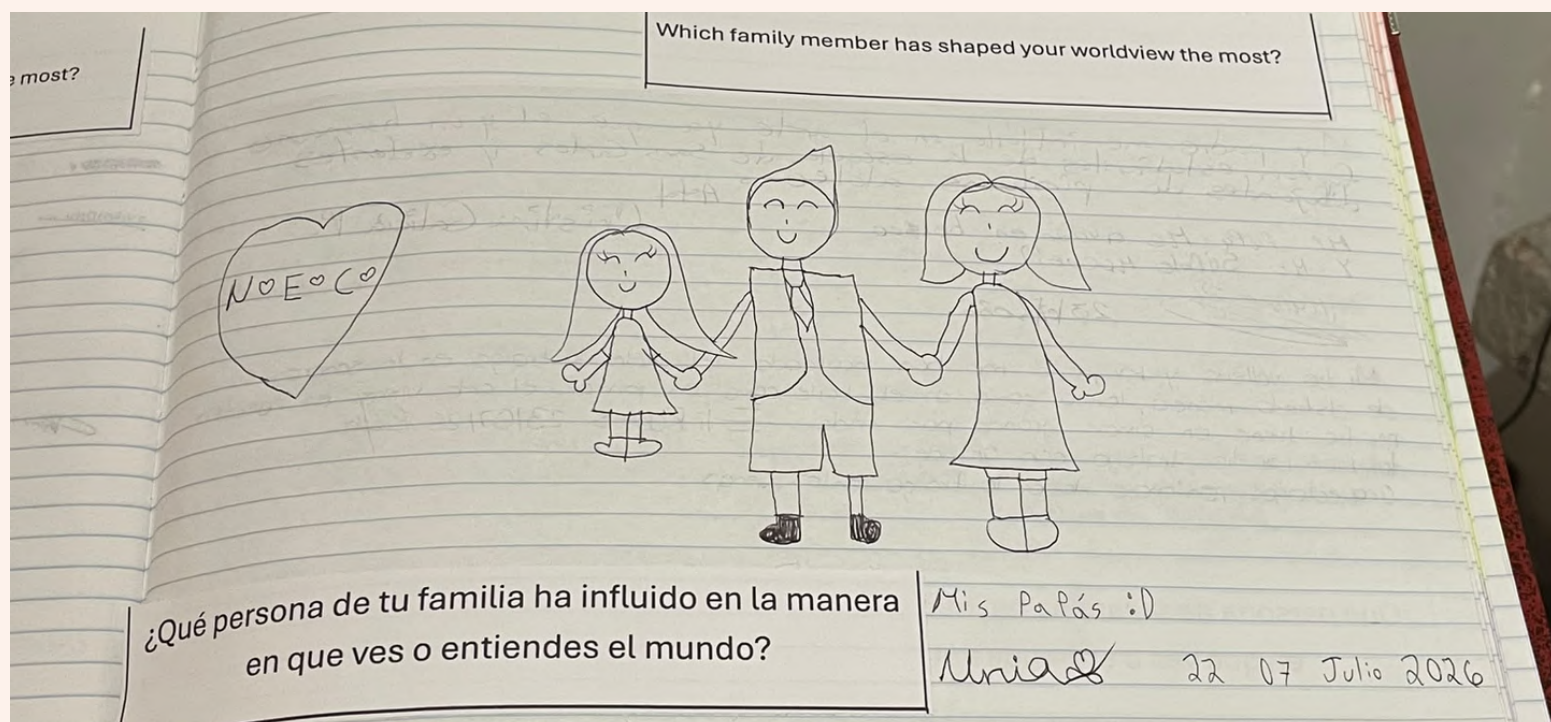
"What do you think about women's support networks after visiting this museum?"

Among the responses were:

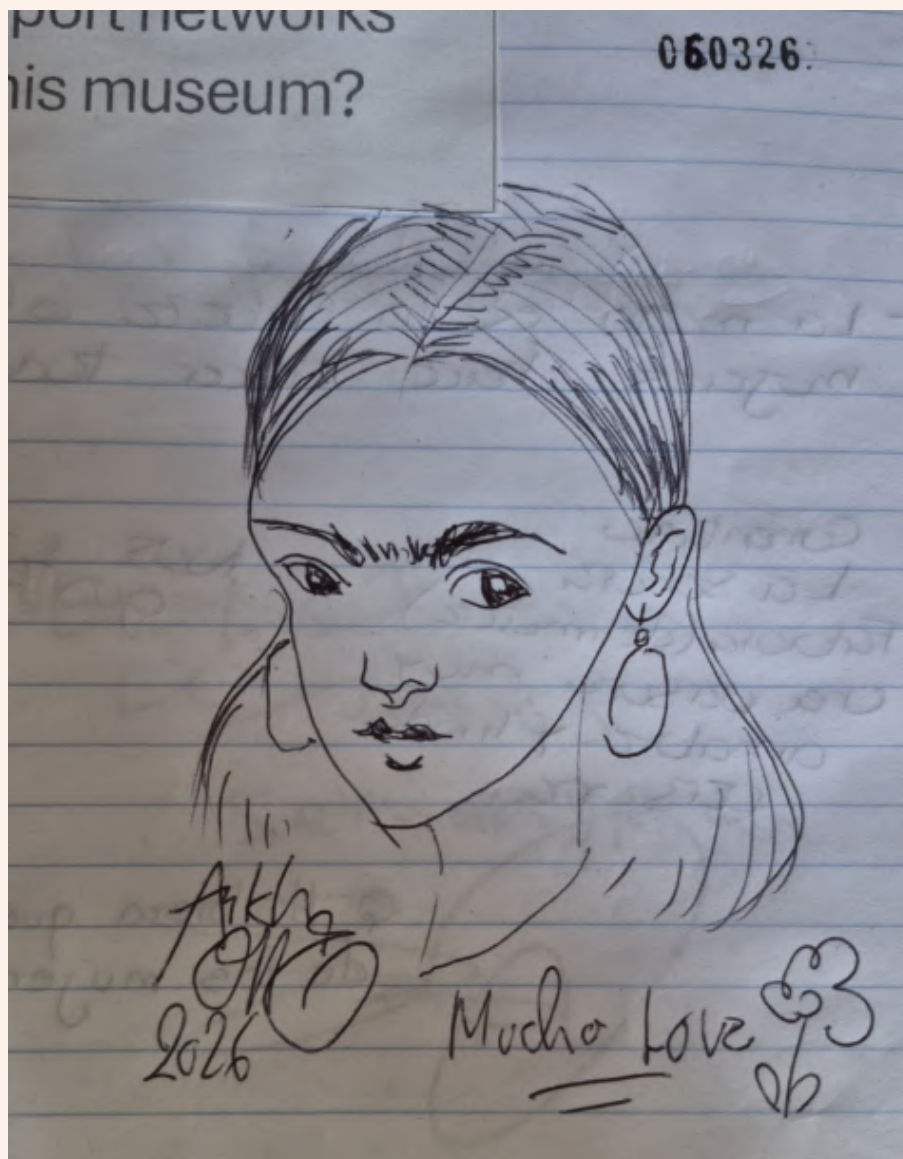
"It was wonderful to discover Frida through her family rather than only through her artistic genius. You can truly feel the strength, sensitivity, and immense love within the Kahlo family. Thank you for opening this space to the public."

"Visiting the museum was a beautiful experience, especially just before International Women's Day. Learning about her family's commitment to supporting women was incredibly heartwarming."

"This museum proves that even one of the world's most celebrated artists can still be rediscovered when the story is told from a different perspective."



Taken together, both the quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that *Museo Casa Kahlo* has succeeded not only in communicating previously unknown aspects of Frida Kahlo's life but also in creating an emotionally resonant experience that encourages visitors to connect the museum's narrative with their own personal memories, relationships, and experiences.







Museo Casa Kahlo demonstrates that even the world's most familiar stories can be transformed when museums choose to change the perspective from which they are told. By placing family, care, and everyday life at the center of Frida Kahlo's narrative, the museum has not only expanded public understanding of one of the world's most celebrated artists, but also created meaningful emotional connections that continue beyond the museum visit. Ultimately, this project shows that storytelling is not simply about communicating the past—it is about reshaping the conversations we have in the present and inspiring new ways of understanding cultural heritage.



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