

Start at home

Faces and Figures



About the Artist

Fiona McMonagle was born in 1977 in Letterkenny, Ireland and emigrated to Australia with her family in the same year. She grew up in Melbourne and was influenced by her artistic brother Tim McMonagle. After high school she commenced studies at RMIT and at Victorian College of the Arts receiving an Associate Diploma of Visual Arts in 1997 and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) in 2000.

McMonagle is best known for her distinctive watercolour portraits of people and pets. She is interested in pushing the boundaries of watercolour, by exploring its use in animation, moving image as well as creating large scale works. McMonagle's subjects are at once powerful and vulnerable, with faint details and soft, transparent qualities, she captures ordinary life in the suburbs. Recently, McMonagle has been interested in depicting iconic and influential people, including celebrities, musicians, actors and royalty.

About the work

Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo is larger than life such that the viewer looks up to the relaxed and confident gaze of Kahlo, an artist of famously small stature. Kahlo gathers her shawl around her with her arms lightly cradling her form. She wears a patterned dress, jewelled drop earrings and turquoise beads. In order to construct the composition, McMonagle completed numerous studies and surveyed photographic portraits of Kahlo, as well the artist's painted self-portraits. *Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo* is an imaginary portrait combining various representations of Frida Kahlo. A striking yet subtle portrait of the iconic painter, McMonagle said that she wanted to capture Kahlo's strength and power but create an image that does not feel staged or performative.

This painting will be a legacy work for the *Frida & Diego: Love & Revolution* exhibition – capturing the enduring influence of Frida Kahlo on contemporary and Australian artists.

image Fiona McMonagle, born Letterkenny, Ireland 1977, *Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo*, 2023, Melbourne, watercolour, ink and gouache on paper, 157.0 x 115.0 cm; Gift of Hannah Andreyev and Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation South Australian Artists Fund 2023, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide; photo: Tobias Titz

Presented by



I was always fascinated by Frida Kahlo. As a young girl and young artist, Frida Kahlo was the first artist who changed how I understood art and what art can do, and make you feel.

Fiona McMonagle



The Activity

McMonagle researched all available photographic portraits of Kahlo to create her portrait before completing numerous studies (sketches or smaller paintings).

What iconic figure do you admire? It might be a sportsperson, musician or actor. Collect as many different images of that person as possible.

Which image captures their character best? In the medium of your choice, create an imaginary portrait of this person that brings together representations of this person that you have found during your research.

Materials

- Paper
- Pencil
- Paint (watercolour pencil optional)
- Paint brushes
- Container of water
- Camera/phone to take photographs.

Take it further

As a young girl McMonagle was always drawing. Spend five minutes each day making a self-portrait. At the end of the term collate all of the portraits and make an analogue flip book or document the portraits to make a digital moving image.

Tip: Take a look at One hundred days at 7pm

image Fiona McMonagle, born Letterkenny, Ireland 1977, *Family portrait no.1, 2017*, Melbourne, oil on linen, 101.5 x 81.5 cm; Public Engagement Fund 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide.

Fiona McMonagle, Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo, is currently on display in the Atrium

<https://bit.ly/3KHURtD>

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

@agsa.adelaide #agsastart