After several weeks of research on Frida’s work Bert Loewenherz began to look out for a team of hair & makeup artists, stylists and assistants and was fortunate enough to discover Turkish actress Idil Üner as the perfect model for the project. Ten years earlier she already auditioned for the feature role in the Frida movie directed by Julie Taymor. A period of intense preparation began. Locations had to be scouted, garments and jewellery had to be inspected. Backdrops had to be painted. Frida’s makeup, eyebrows and exotic hairstyles were discussed. Cats, parrots and a monkey had to be found. An iron cot, a wheelchair, gynaecological instruments from the 1920s and many other things had to be made available. Two months later the project had matured and the final shootings were realised during three days on three different locations in the City of Berlin.

A 20-minute video on the making of “The Eyes of Frida Kahlo” documents the background history of how the project came into being. The camera provides a glimpse behind the curtain to observe the exciting processes involved in composing these portraits, and the intricate psychological work between photographer and model during the final three days of the shoot. In a different video, the photographer speaks in an interview about his personal motivation for this project, how finding the right model presented so many difficulties, and why he considers Frida Kahlo to be a Shaman of the arts.
The Eyes of Frida Kahlo

24 Photographic works
C-prints
Various Sizes
Berlin 2010
Bert Loewenherz

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The Project

“It was a great challenge for the entire team, to dissect Frida’s strong works, and solve the puzzles – all the surreal, hidden, and symbolic levels of her work in order to translate it photographically.”
Set Design

“In order to lend my production a coherent look, all of the psychological, stylistic, and color elements have to blend together. A good choice of the shoot-locations, and set designs are also critically important. All clothing and accessories that we selected were originals from the 1920’s and 30’s. Borrowing from the film designs of the early 20th century, we used theatrical techniques like painted backdrops. These large-format paintings by the artist Thomas Schliesser, added a harmonious touch to the motifs that formed the picture and color schemes, by opening room for interpretation.”
Costume Design

“The costume design proved a daunting challenge, as Frida concealed her deeply wounded body and soul behind brightly colored garments, traditional Mexican robes and a unique ethnic mix of styles. We felt inspired by this unconventional trait and combined Mexican, Indian, Greek and Nepalese costumes and accessories with Chinese and Japanese elements originally from the 1920s.”

Aside from that, there were other biographical influences involved in the styling concept. Because Frida had a private collection of kimonos, we worked original 1920’s Chinese silk kimonos into the pictures “Between the Curtains” and “Self-Portrait with Wheelchair”.

Bert Loewenherz
Reviews

“A fascinating photographic project that goes directly under the skin. A congenial artwork about a legendary artist.”

“Hypnotic, touching, creative and professional. A superb homage to Frida Kahlo. This is probably one of the most fascinating art projects I have ever seen.”

“Amazing work! As if Frida was still alive! These photographs irritate, bewitch and fascinate at the same time. Idil Üner as Frida Kahlo in the best role of her life!”

“Marian spirit and goddess of war – Frida’s essence in one photograph. Thank you Thank you Thank you!”
Bert Loewenherz

Exhibitions

Dust Temple, Gold Coast 2015
Month of Photography, Berlin 2014
Private Thursday, Berlin 2013
Atelier MooGreen, Berlin 2012
Galerie Photo Edition, Berlin 2010
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2008
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2007
Photokina, Köln 2004
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2004
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2003
Einstein, München 2002
HeiligGeistKirche, Frankfurt 2002
Mahnmal St. Nikolai, Hamburg 2002
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2002
Staatsbank, Berlin 2001
Art Directors Club, Berlin 2000
Month of Photography, Bratislava 2000
ESD Galerie, Berlin 1999
Art Directors Club, Berlin 1999
Internationale Fototage, Herten 1999
Kunstamt Reinickendorf, Berlin 1999
Zoofestivals, Wuppertal 1999
Galerie U Reeckych, Prag 1998
Galerie KunstNetzWerk, München 1998
Photokina, Köln 1998
Stiftung Starke im Löwenpalais, Berlin 1998
Photokina Kodak Galerie, Köln 1998
Deutsche Fototag, Frankfurt 1996
PPS Galerie, Berlin 1996
Museum für virtuelle Kunst, Erfurt 1995
Salon of Photographic Art, Rovigno 1995
Photoka, Köln 1994
Deutsche Fototage, Frankfurt 1993
Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Brescia 1993
Galerie 77, Berlin 1992
Kulturstiftung Schloss Britz, Berlin 1991
Historisches Museum, Frankfurt 1991
Photographers Gallery, London 1990
PhotoArt, Heidelberg 1990
Arts&Technology Museum, Milano 1989
Galerie Frank Müller, Berlin 1987
October Gallery, London 1986
Selbach Galerie, Berlin 1984
Awards
Bert Loewenherz
Midas Award of Excellence, New York
Art Directors Club Europe Award
Kodak Gold Circle Award
Kodak Talents Award
Scholarship by the Cinematheque Francaise, Paris
Honorary appointment into the German Photographic Society
OBS Award Corporate Communication.
Hasselblad Fine Art Award
Kodak Portrait Award
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Collection The Polaroid Collection, USA
Collection The Lorenzo Merlo Collection, Italy
Collection The Fritz Huber Collection at Museum Ludwig, Germany
Collection The Hand Collection Prof. Dr. Vaubel, Germany
Collection The Bert Hartkamp Collection, Netherlands
Collection Machiel Botmann, Netherlands
Collection Deutsche Fotostage, Germany
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