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Frida Kahlo
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Six-figure sum for Frida Kahlo's journal

Abrams's winning bid for 170-page illustrated diary

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A journal by Mexican painter Frida Kahlo will be published in facsimile by Harry N. Abrams Inc., which recently acquired world rights from the Diego Rivera Trust in Mexico City, where the little-seen document has been held since the artist's death. Abrams's president Paul Gottlieb told The Art Newspaper he participated in a sealed-bid auction, rare in the art-book industry, but indicative of the book's potential. The winning offer was "six figures, but substantially under the half a million mark", he says. The prize is a 170-page manuscript (6 x 9 inches) containing diary entries from around 1944-54, with poems and reveries, some addressed to Kahlo's husband, the muralist Diego Rivera ("My body is filled with you for days and days", she writes at one point.)

The pages are colourful, with about half covered with watercolour illustrations. The book itself has been exhibited and a number of its pages reproduced in Hayden Herrera's 1991 biography *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings* (Harper Collins). Yet its full contents remain relatively unknown,

even to scholars. This is due largely to the Rivera Trust's obdurate president, Dolores Olmedo, who only recently granted publication rights to a young Mexican scholar, Claudia Madrazo, who brought a colour-xerox of the journal to New York where the deal was brokered by literary agent Gloria Loomis. It is unclear whether additional publishable material may emerge from the estate.

Prices for Kahlo's art have soared, especially since 1984 when Mexico declared her art patrimonio nacional, prohibiting its export for sale. Whereas in 1977 one of her surrealistic self-portraits ("The Tree of Hope Stands Firm") was auctioned for \$19,000, by 1990 another would become the first Latin-American picture to top \$1 million. Her auction record stands at \$1.65 million and pictures have sold well privately to aficionados such as pop entertainer Madonna. New York dealer Mary-Anne Martin claims to have participated in a sale of a self-portrait for more than \$3 million.

Abrams intends to augment the facsimile with an introduction by Carlos Fuentes, complete English translations from the Spanish, and a commentary by Sarah Lowe, who has already written a Kahlo book for the publisher. The 288-page cloth edition should be available in the autumn of 1995 for around \$50, and foreign language editions may follow.

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