

AN EXPANDED MUSE

WORKS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

In tandem with *Kahlo: An Expanded Body*, this William Merritt Chase and Alice Gerson—Mrs. Chase—exhibition from the Museum’s permanent collection highlights the importance of family participation and the theatrical flair of the portrait models. In the Chase household, it was a customary practice for the daughters—most consistently, Dorothy, Alice, and Helen—to model for their father’s paintings. Similarly, Frida Kahlo grew up accustomed to being a portrait model for her father Guillermo Kahlo’s photographs, and this family dynamic influenced her own self-portraits. Kahlo grew up keenly aware of the impact of colorful wardrobes, performativity, identity politics, and the resulting aura that would inspire an awe that transformed her into a contemporary global muse.

Chase’s thoughtfully staged theatrical paintings were ripe with fanciful costuming, lush environments, dramatic poses, and the reification of the models as muses. As for Gerson, her witnessing these staged scenes influenced the compositions of her family photographic portraits, many of which are on view in this exhibition, and earned her the praise of her renowned husband. *An Expanded Muse* shares historical insights and takes a closer look into the role that family life played in the paintings by William Merritt Chase and photographs by Alice Gerson and expands upon the inspiration behind some of Chase’s most notable works.

This exhibition is organized by Kaitlin Halloran, Curatorial Assistant and Publications Coordinator, and Brianna L. Hernández, Curatorial Fellow, with research support from Alicia G. Longwell, former Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Chief Curator.