

The Museum of Modern Art

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AND NEUE GALERIE NEW YORK ACQUIRE PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER PAINTING, THE ONLY SELF-PORTRAIT BY THE ARTIST IN THE UNITED STATES

New York, NY, November 21, 2017—The Museum of Modern Art and Neue Galerie New York have jointly acquired Paula Modersohn-Becker's *Self-Portrait with Two Flowers in Her Raised Left Hand* (1907). The work is the gift of Debra and Leon Black to The Museum of Modern Art and the gift of Ronald S. Lauder to the Neue Galerie.

Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, said, "This will be the only self-portrait by Paula Modersohn-Becker in the United States, and her only painting in a New York institution. An acquisition of this importance and rarity is a thrilling occurrence here at the Museum. *Self-Portrait* will be the earliest painting by a woman on view in our collection galleries."

Paula Modersohn-Becker (German, 1876–1907) is a pioneering figure of the 20th-century German avant-garde. In this emblematic self-portrait, a pregnant Modersohn-Becker stares out at the viewer with a steady, compelling gaze. One hand is raised, holding two stylized flowers, while the other is positioned over her swelling belly. Modersohn-Becker is believed to be the first woman to paint herself while pregnant; this painting is one of only a few such portrayals. She gave birth to a daughter on November 2, 1907, and died of complications on November 21, at age 31. The painting's audacious palette, stark composition, and psychological depth reflect Modersohn-Becker's position as a pivotal link between Fauvism and German Expressionism.

Modersohn-Becker was born in Dresden and studied at the Drawing and Painting School of the Association of Women Artists in Berlin between 1896 and 1898. In 1898 she moved to Worpswede, an artists' community in a small village north of Bremen, where she met her husband, the artist Otto Modersohn, and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who became a close ally and advocate of her work. The Worpswede artists were known for their commitment to nature and to positive depictions of the local villagers, but Modersohn-Becker soon grew restless. Between 1900 and in 1907, she made four catalytic trips to Paris, where she frequented the Louvre and visited other museums and art galleries. Despite her early death, she left behind more than 700 paintings and some 1,000 works on paper.

The painting joins four intaglio prints by Modersohn-Becker in MoMA's collection. Modersohn-Becker was the only woman artist included by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., in his 1931 survey exhibition *German Painting and Sculpture* at The Museum of Modern Art. Today, many decades later, her

outstanding *Self-Portrait with Two Flowers in Her Raised Left Hand* is the first painting by Paula Modersohn-Becker to enter the Museum's collection. The painting was acquired from the descendants of the collectors Paul and Else Speck. It had formerly been owned by the legendary Berlin collector Hugo Simon, who purchased the painting from gallerist I. B. Neumann's first exhibition of Modersohn-Becker's work in 1919.

Self-Portrait with Two Flowers in Her Raised Left Hand will go on view on November 22 in the Museum's fifth-floor collection galleries.

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