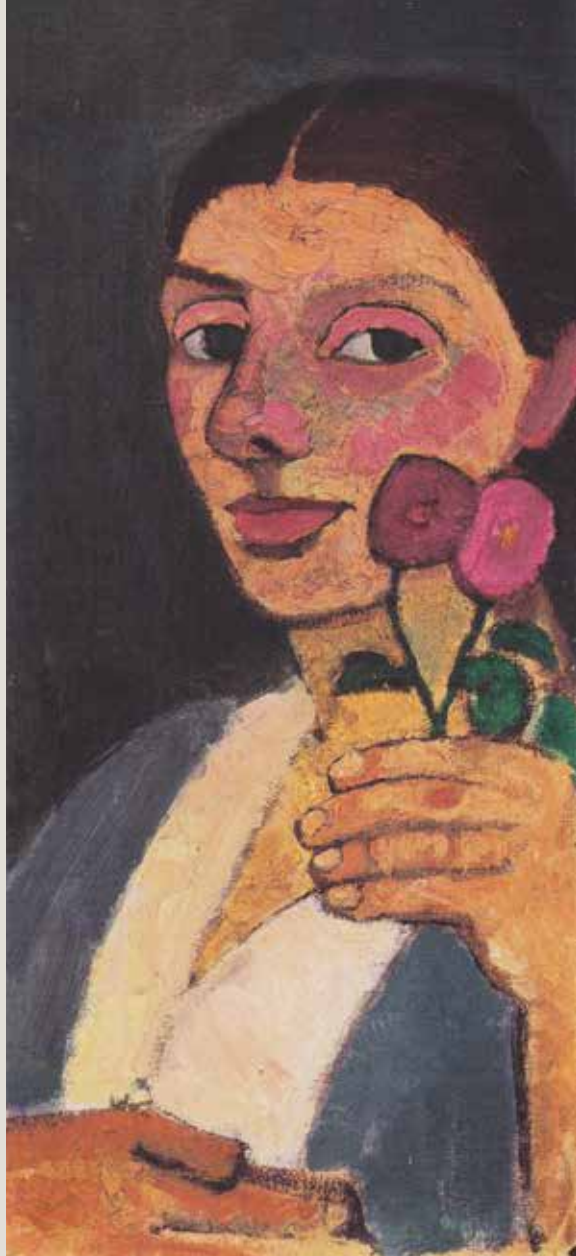


Paula Modersohn-Becker

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER (1876–1907) was a German Expressionist painter. During her short career, she painted many self-portraits and is considered to be the first woman artist to depict herself nude. Many of her works focused on her pregnancy, another first among Western women artists.



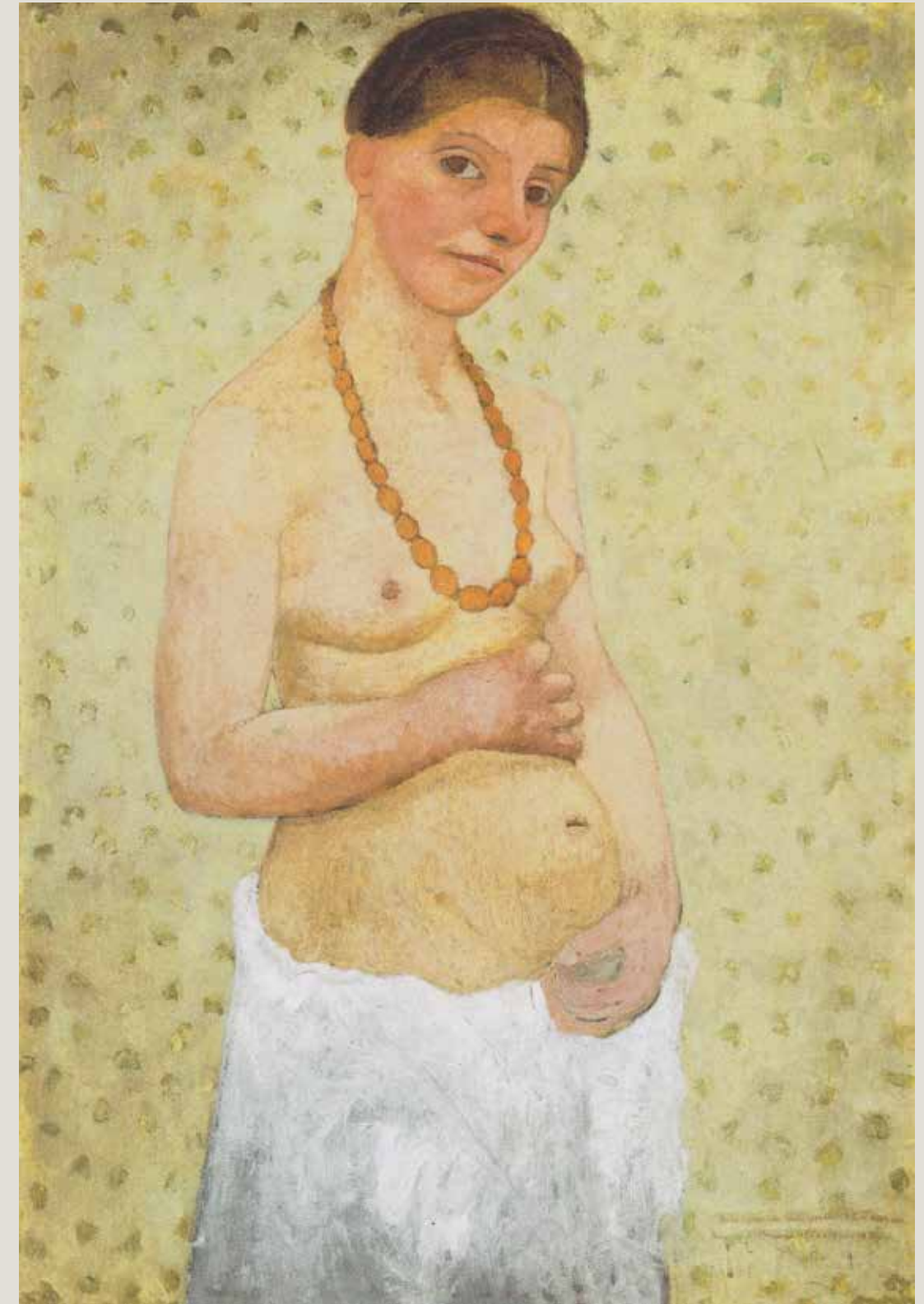
Self-portrait with Two Flowers
in Her Raised Left Hand, 1907

Paula Becker married Otto Modersohn in 1901 and tried to combine her responsibilities as wife, housewife, and stepmother to Otto's infant daughter with her career as an artist. She and Otto separated for a time, and when she returned to him, she expressed concern about combining motherhood with her creative ambitions. Nevertheless, she gave birth to a daughter on November 2, 1907, and both parents were overjoyed. Sadly, however, she died a couple of weeks later, likely due to deep venous thrombosis, the result of remaining bedridden following birth.

Modersohn-Becker was a close friend of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. In 1906 Modersohn-Becker wrote the following to him: "And now I don't know how to sign my name. I am not Modersohn and I am not Paula Becker anymore, I am Me, and hope to become that more and more." ❖



Self-portrait, 1897



Self-portrait at Sixth Wedding Anniversary, May 25, 1906