

	<p>Object: Self-Portrait before a Green Background with Blue Iris</p> <p>Museum: Kunsthalle Bremen Am Wall 207 28195 Bremen (04 21) 3 29 08-0 info@kunsthalle-bremen.de</p> <p>Collection: Künstlerkolonie Worpswede, Paula Modersohn-Becker und die Kunst der Moderne, Gemälde und Skulpturen</p> <p>Inventory number: 972-1967/20</p>
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## Description

Paula Modersohn-Becker is today considered to be one of the pioneers of modernism. Virtually unknown during her lifetime, from 1900 to 1907, she divided her time working between the polar opposites of the lonely village of Worpswede on the moors near Bremen and Paris, Europe's pulsating art metropolis. During the short period in which she was active as an artist, Modersohn-Becker probed her own ego in more than 30 selfportraits. In *Self-Portrait before a Green Background with Blue Iris* she rendered her face with extremely simplified features, making it appear flat. Her gaze seems ambiguous, at once concentrated and introverted. In its mysterious aloofness, but also owing to the opaque application of paint, the portrait is reminiscent of the mummy portraits from the Egyptian oasis of Fayum (1st–4th century AD) that had roused Modersohn-Becker's enthusiasm at the Louvre during her second stay in Paris, in 1903. *Still Life with Apples and Bananas* was done at about the same time as *Self-Portrait*. The still life was not highly regarded from an academic standpoint. But this genre is precisely what afforded artists of the avant-garde in the second half of the 19th century a welcome opportunity to experiment freely. In this genre, Modersohn-Becker reflected upon fundamental principles of composition manifested within the picture, revealing herself to be strongly influenced by Paul Cézanne, whose art she had discovered as early as 1900, when she visited Paris for the first time. Like Cézanne, in her still life, she simplified apples to plain spheres of color. By deliberately changing the perspective, she has created a dynamic picture space, beyond conventional perception. The tabletop, tipped towards us so that we look down upon it, stands in contrast to the jug, which is more strongly portrayed from the side. Likewise, it contrasts with the left edge of the table, which, confusingly, extends nearly vertically. The composition maintains its equilibrium solely by the arrangement of the fruit. The objects have been united in substance by means of the color. They are lent materiality via the gently agitated, thick application of paint.

## Basic data

Material/Technique:

Oil on canvas

Measurements:

40.7 x 34.5 cm

## Events

Painted

When

1900-1907

Who

Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907)

Where

## Keywords

- Painting