

Book Review: Diane Radycki, *Paula Modersohn-Becker: The First Modern Women Artist*. Yale University Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780300185300 (Cloth). 256 Pages. \$60.00.

Reviewed by Beth Susan Gersh-Nešić¹

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Rarely do we find research on the early modernist women artists from Germany, particularly the early 20th-century German *émigrées* who settled in Paris, if only for a little while. Diane Radycki tells the story of one young woman in her excellent monograph *Paula Modersohn-Becker: The First Modern Woman Artist*. It is a bold pronouncement that challenges the very notion of modernism itself.

Radycki is a professor at Moravian College, director of the Payne Gallery at the college, and one of the preeminent Paula Modersohn-Becker scholars on the planet. Fellow art historians know her papers and panels at College Art Associate conferences and published articles. Fans of Modersohn-Becker know her translation of the artist's letter and journals (Scarecrow Press, 1980). Needless to say, the PMB fan-base has been waiting patiently for this monograph on their beloved artist. The wait was worth it.

But why is there such excitement over this early modernist German woman artist? Simple: her work is beautiful. Warmed by earth tones enlivened by radiant reds, oranges, blues, greens and yellows, her rich surfaces draw us in for a closer inspection. In her late work, we see her deliberate "primitivized" in a Gauguinesque way that expresses a robust rusticity, perfectly attuned to the subject matter that inspired her art. For Modersohn-Becker too searched for purity in visual terms: clear outlines

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