

# **Archipenko : the Parisian years : the Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 20 - October 18, 1970**

Author

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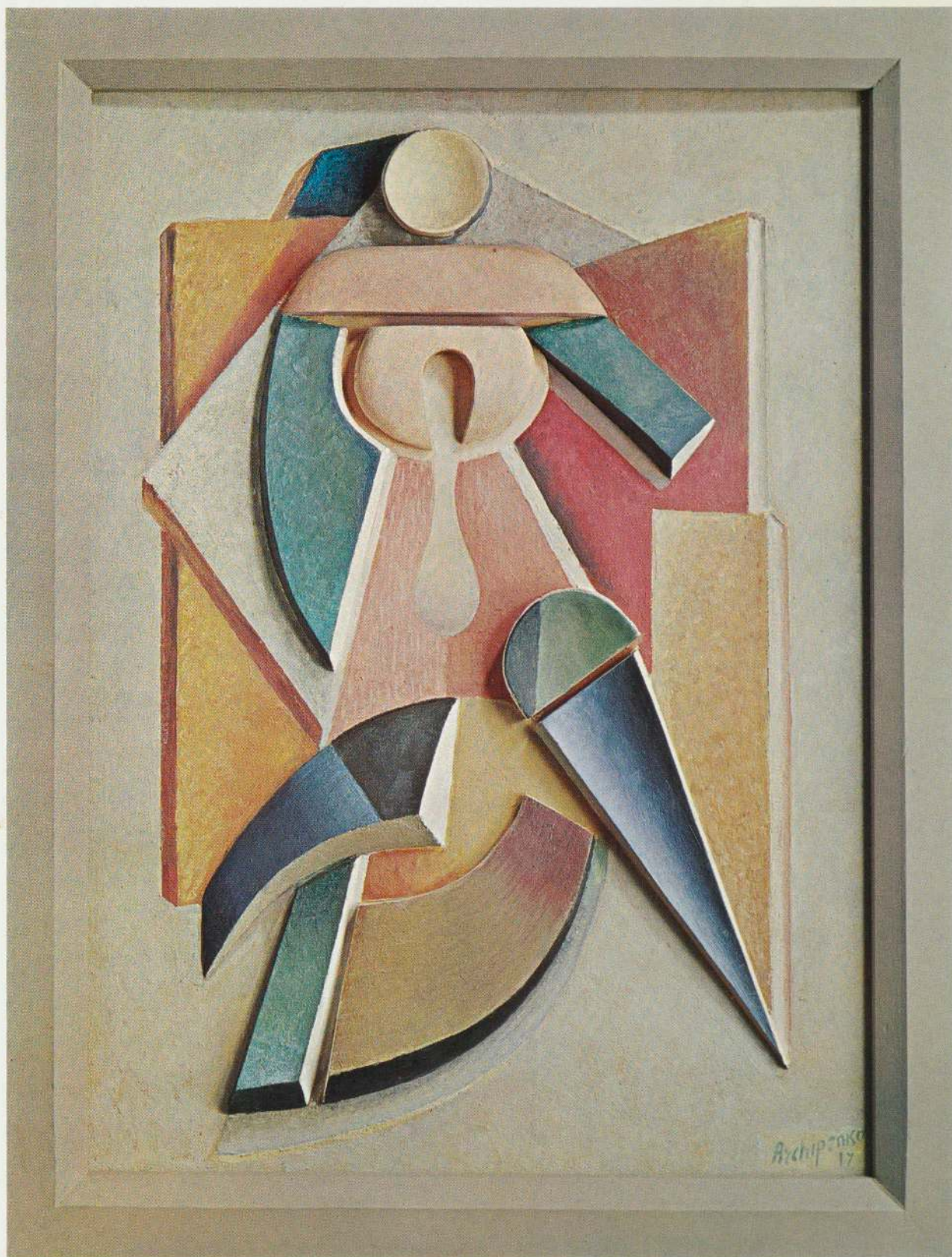
**The Museum of Modern Art**

Exhibition URL

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# ARCHIPENKO: THE PARISIAN YEARS



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, JULY 20—OCTOBER 18, 1970



## ARCHIPENKO: THE PARISIAN YEARS

In 1908, when he was twenty-one, Alexander Archipenko left his native Russia for France, where he remained until 1921. After these years in France, he moved to Berlin and two years later settled in the United States. He died in New York in 1964.

This exhibition explores Archipenko's development as an artist during his stay in France. The exact dating of some of his works between 1909 and 1916 has not been definitely established. The checklist below, however, suggests a probable sequence for these works.

By 1913, Archipenko had found the direction of his personal style, and in the same year he exhibited in the famous Armory Show in New York. The significance of his work during his heroic years in France can be clearly revealed only by comparison with the contemporaneous and Cubist sculpture of Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipchitz, and Pablo Picasso. As a sculptor, Archipenko explored spatial relationships and the movement of forms. He was also particularly interested in the uses of color in sculpture. No matter how abstract his analysis, his inspiration derived from nature. Throughout his life, he remained a solitary figure. Although an innovator, he always remained close to the Cubist tradition as it was established in France during the years of his sojourn there.

On behalf of the Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art, I wish to express thanks to the lenders, and particular gratitude to the estate of the artist and Mr. Donald H. Karshan for assistance in organizing this exhibition. Mr. Karshan, Director of the New York Cultural Center, is Archipenko's most eloquent champion. I am also grateful to Katharine Kuh for kindly permitting us to reprint her essay on Archipenko, originally published in the catalogue of the memorial exhibition of the artist's work organized in 1967 by the UCLA Art Galleries, University of California at Los Angeles.

The present exhibition was originally conceived by William Agee, former Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at this museum. It has been installed by J. Wilder Green, Director of the Exhibition Program of The Museum of Modern Art, under whose auspices selections from this show will tour the United States and Canada.

William S. Lieberman  
Director, Painting and Sculpture





## ALEXANDER ARCHIPENKO: 1887-1964

Alexander Archipenko, the first sculptor of our century to recognize form as an illusion, investigated this mystery throughout his entire life. Almost from the beginning he became involved with the void, with perforated and concave planes, with what today we call negative form. Now, well over a half-century since his earliest experiments were initiated, we accept the fact that less can make more, that space can miraculously turn into form. What we occasionally forget is how much Archipenko was responsible for these intangible discoveries.

Long applauded as a pioneer Cubist sculptor, he was far more than that. He never merely transferred Cubist theories from painting to sculpture; he virtually invented his own kind of three-dimensional Cubism. Relying on the human body, preferably the female nude, as his point of departure, Archipenko constructed his figures with architectural precision, yet rarely sacrificed the rhythms of nature. His idealized women have the elongated elegance we sometimes associate with undulating plants, sometimes with those Gothic saints which echo the soaring churches they decorate. Archipenko confessed, "From the Gothic I learned to see the transformation of proportions as an . . . expression of the spiritual."

Unlike the medieval sculpture, his figures are seldom frontal. They turn, twist, bend; they are inverted, foreshortened, and tautly poised. They move, yet more important—light moves over them with rippling speed. As early as 1912 Archipenko combined wood, glass, mirror, metal, canvas, and wire in dynamic constructions (or should we say assemblages) where light was manipulated with meticulous control, and where reflections and transparencies were deliberately exploited. A year or two later, again predicting present-day trends, he was already considering environmental groups.

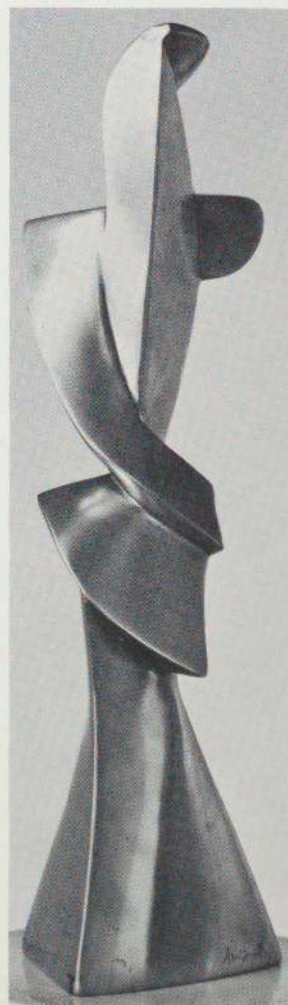
But his greatest contribution was metaphysical. He made what is, seem what it is not. It was the duality of vision that interested him, less the image itself than our reaction to the image. Turning total voids into solid form, he also discovered that surrounding space could become as potent as dense mass.

Though Archipenko was widely acclaimed in Europe, he was never fully appreciated in America where he lived for thirty-four years. Coming here

at the age of thirty-six and at the height of his European fame, he remained something of a displaced loner, a man who always seemed to be looking in from the outside. Moving from place to place, he restlessly pursued his roots, but they were not to be found in America. And, of course, during the early twenties, this country was scarcely ready for his sophisticated metaphors. Later, his ebullient color, admittedly more decorative than structural, disturbed American eyes which at that time were happier with more restrained Gallic taste.

For, from beginning to end, Archipenko remained a Ukrainian, a man who often seemed closer to the near East than the West. The golden ornament and linear eloquence of Byzantium are so manifest in his work as sometimes to obscure its vigor. But, make no mistake, Archipenko belongs securely to the history of modern art, less because he reflected its influence than because he himself helped create it.

Katharine Kuh



7.



25.



## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Dimensions are given in inches, height preceding width preceding depth. Parentheses indicate that a date has been supplied or varies from the one that appears on the work itself. Alternate titles encountered in the literature are included.

### SCULPTURE

1. Woman (Head on Knee). (*Femme; Tristesse; La Tête sur les genoux.*) 1909 (probably 1909-1910). Bronze, 17 x 10 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Private collection, New York
2. Suzanne. (1909-1910). Stone, 16 x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 9". Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California
3. Black Seated Torso (*Torso noir assis*). 1909 (probably 1911?). Bronze, 15 x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls, New York
4. Madonna of the Rocks (*La Mère dans les roches; Mère et enfant; La Mère avec l'enfant*). 1912. Plaster, 21 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 13 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 13". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Frances Archipenko and Klaus Perls, 1970
5. Bending (*Penché*). 1910 (probably 1912?). Bronze, chromium plated, 11 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Estate of the artist
6. Dance (*La Danse*). 1912 (probably 1912-1913?). Bronze, 25 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Perls Galleries, New York
7. Silhouette. 1910 (probably 1913?). Bronze, nickel plated, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt (illustrated)
8. Seated Figure (*Forme géométrique assise*). 1913. Polychromed bronze, 18 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 5". Private collection, New York
9. Head (Construction with Crossing Planes). (*Tête; Construction aux plans entrecoupés*). 1913. Bronze, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Perls Galleries, New York
10. Statue on Triangular Base (*Statue sur socle triangulaire*). 1914. Bronze, 30 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 6 x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Donald H. Karshan, 1970
11. Gondolier (*Le Gondolier*). 1914. Bronze, 35 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Frances Archipenko in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., 1969 (illustrated)
12. Boxing (Boxers; Struggle). (*La Boxe*). 1914 (cast 1966). Bronze, 23 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Donald H. Karshan, 1966 (illustrated)
13. Woman Combing Her Hair (*Femme se coiffant*). (1915). Bronze, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1963
14. The Bather (*La Baigneuse*). 1915. Wood and metal relief, painted, 20 x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection (illustrated)
15. Woman with Hat (*La Femme au chapeau*). (1916). Plaster, wood, and metal on wood, painted, 14 $\frac{7}{8}$  x

11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Getler, Roslyn Harbor, New York

16. Portuguese (*La Portugaise*). 1916. Polychromed bronze, 24 x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Estate of the artist
17. Walking (*Femme qui marche*). 1912 (probably 1916?). Polychromed bronze, 26 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Private collection, New York
18. Standing Figure (*Forme debout*). 1916. Bronze, 12 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Estate of the artist
19. Seated Black Concave (*Femme assise — concave noir*). 1916. Bronze, 31 x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Estate of the artist
20. Egyptian Motif (*Motif égyptien*). 1917. Bronze, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Estate of the artist
21. Figure. 1917. Sculpto-painting (painted wood). 27 x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Estate of the artist (illustrated on cover)
22. Figure (Vase Woman). (*Femme-vase*). 1919. Bronze, 22 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 3 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, gift of Katherine S. Dreier Estate, 1953
23. Glass on Table (*Petit verre sur la table*). (1920). Polychromed wood and plaster relief, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 13". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953
24. Geometric Seated Figure (*Femme assise; Figure géométrique avec espace et concave*). 1920. Bronze, 25 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9 x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Estate of the artist
25. White Torso (*Torse blanc*). (c. 1920, after marble of 1916). Silvered bronze, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 3 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Thompson, 1961 (illustrated)
26. Ray (*Rayon*). 1919 (1956; variant of No. 22, Figure-Vase Woman, 1919). Bronze, 62 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Private collection, New York

### WORKS ON PAPER

27. Composition. 1913. Brush and ink, gouache, colored pencil, and pasted paper on paper, 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (sheet). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, extended loan from Donald H. Karshan
  28. Figure in Movement (*Forme en mouvement*). 1913. Pasted paper and crayon on brown paper, 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (sheet). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Perls Galleries, New York, 1969
  29. Bending (*Penché*). (1920). Drypoint, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{13}{16}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mrs. Frances Archipenko, 1969
  30. Kneeling (*A Genoux*). (1920). Drypoint, 7 x 5". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mrs. Frances Archipenko, 1969
- Three plates from the portfolio *Dreizehn Steinzeichnungen*, published in Berlin, Ernst Wasmuth (1920-1921). No. 16 of 60 copies. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1950
31. Plate 2. Lithograph, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 $\frac{11}{16}$ "
  32. Plate 7. Lithograph, printed in color, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
  33. Plate 8. Lithograph, printed in color, 18 $\frac{9}{16}$  x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "



