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| **Archipenko, Alexander (1887–1964)** |
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| Alexander Archipenko was a Ukrainian sculptor and the son of Paraskeva Vasylivna [née Makhova] and Porfirii Antonovych Archipenko. His father was a professor of engineering at the University of Kyiv, an inventor, and a mechanical engineer. He studied painting and sculpture at the Kyiv Art School from 1902 until 1905, when he was expelled for criticizing its conservatism. Outside formal schooling, he was interested in ancient art indigenous to Ukraine — stone sculptures of females known as ‘babas,’ Scythian works, as well as those from Neolithic Trypillian culture being excavated in the region at the time. These would inform his work throughout his career, as would ancient Egyptian, pre-Columbian and Byzantine art. His polychromed sculpture was exhibited in his first show in 1906 in a village outside Kyiv. He moved to Moscow that same year, participated in group exhibitions, and saw French avant-garde art first-hand, particularly the first Zolotoe runo salon in spring 1908. Later that year, he moved to Paris and, after two weeks at the École des Beaux-Arts, decided to study independently from direct observation of art works at local museums. Archipenko opened a studio and built relationships with many artists of the cubist circle, particularly brothers Marcel Duchamp and Raymond Duchamp-Villon and Fernand Léger. |
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He first exhibited with the artists in his new circle in 1910 at the Salon des Indépendents XXVI, joining them regularly until their last group show in 1920. Among numerous additional exhibits are the Armory Show in 1913, the Futurists in 1914 and solo, at Der Sturm in Berlin 1913, the Venice Biennale in 1920 and at Société Anonyme, New York in 1921. The latter was organized by Marcel Duchamp and Katherine Dreier, who was an ardent promoter of modern art in the United States.

The years from 1908 until the early 1920s were an extremely innovative period in Archipenko’s artistic production. A number of his early works with the human figure are block-like and self-contained explorations of mass and shape in varying degrees of angularity. Voids of space and concave and convex forms are increasingly included as defining sculptural elements (e.g., *Woman Combing Her Hair*, 1914) and are informed by dance, movement, and the dynamics of opposing forces, an interest of many artists at the time. Beginning in 1914, Archipenko produced his sculpto-paintings — constructed, brightly painted wall reliefs, inspired in part by collage’s assemblage of various textured elements. He created near forty, primarily focusing on women in interiors until 1923; he resumed creating wall reliefs in the 1950s.

In 1920, Archipenko moved to Berlin and opened a school while still maintaining his Paris studio. There he married the sculptor Angelica Bruno-Schmitz, who worked under the name Gela Forster. She was a founding member of the Dresdner Sezession Gruppe 1919, and a significant artist of German Expressionism. In 1921, Archipenko returned to more naturalistic representations, such as *Feminine Solitude* (1921). He and Schmitz emigrated to the U.S. in 1923, settling in New York. In 1927, he received a patent for his invention *Archipentura*, a machine designed to produce ‘true motion’ in painting. Now lost, it consisted of two 3’ x 7’ boxes, into which horizontal strips of canvas were sequentially mounted to make up an entire image. When activated, a mechanism moved the strips, changing the image. He continued to exhibit across the U.S. and was given a solo exhibition at the Ukrainian Pavilion of the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition in 1933. He taught in Los Angeles, then in Chicago at the New Bauhaus upon receiving an invitation from László Moholy-Nagy, it’s director, before returning to New York, where he began producing sculptures made of plexiglass. During the 1950s, his works were featured in a number of major exhibitions on 20th century modern art, such as *L’Oeuvre du XXe, Peintures, Sculptures* (Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, Tate Gallery as XXth Century Masterpieces); *American Sculpture* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1951); *Sculpture of the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1952) and received national honours for his innovations in sculpture.


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