

# REFASHIONING THE FIGURE

## The Sketchbooks of Archipenko c.1920

MAREK BARTELIK



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Anyone who cannot come to terms with his life while he is alive needs one hand to ward off a little his despair over his fate...but with his other hand he can note down what he sees among the ruins, for he sees different (and more) things than the others: after all, he is dead in his own lifetime, he is the real survivor.<sup>2</sup>

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, entry on 19 October 1921

The quest for paradigms in modern art has taken many diverse paths, although historians have underplayed this variety in their search for continuity of experience. Since artists in their studios produce paradigms which are then superseded, the non-linear and heterogeneous development of their work comes to define both the timeless and the changing aspects of their art. At the same time, artists' experience outside of their workplace significantly affects the way art is made and disseminated. The fate of artworks is bound to the condition of displacement, or, sometimes misplacement, as artists move from place to place, pledging allegiance to the old tradition of the wandering artist. What happened to the drawings and watercolours from the three sketchbooks by the Ukrainian-born artist Alexander Archipenko presented by the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds is a poignant example of such a fate. Executed and presented in several exhibitions before the artist moved from Germany to the United States in the early 1920s, then purchased by a private collector in 1925, these works are now being shown to the public for the first time in this particular grouping.

It is appropriate that changes in modern art should be linked to the transitional aspects of the identity of the artist, because many key figures in the early twentieth century were émigrés, who made journeying a crucial element of their work. The nature of those artists' existence exemplifies an important characteristic of the modern condition: its nomadic character. Although such nomads may have desired to ground themselves in a specific place — both in terms of finding a stable home and of formulating a coherent artistic programme — it was the fragmented, transitory, and, sometimes, 'marginal' character of their works that constitutes their important contribution to modern art. Confronted with their otherness as émigrés, these artists redefined the meaning of the centre and the periphery by linking them to the context of cultural diversity and stylistic pluralism.<sup>3</sup>

Centres and peripheries have rarely been separated. Modern art developed in metropolises such as Paris, Berlin, London, and New York, in large part as a result of artists' migration to these cities. In the early twentieth century, numerous artists came to the West from Eastern Europe and Russia. Though they tended to change their art in response to the demands of a particular centre, they seldom lost sight of their origins.<sup>4</sup> Many of those artists remained in the West throughout their lives, but they often participated in exhibitions in their countries of origin and also wrote articles for journals and art magazines published there. Those who returned to their homelands after shorter or longer sojourns in the West usually played crucial roles in transforming modern art in those localities.

Although Eastern European and Russian artists were highly visible in the West in the first decades of the twentieth century, for Westerners Eastern Europe was a remote place: a lawless and mysterious periphery on the borders of civilisation. The situation of artists from Czechoslovakia, Poland, or Ukraine was additionally complicated by the fact that prior to the end of the First World War their countries did not exist as independent states, since they had been absorbed into Austro-Hungary, Germany, and Russia. Alfred Jarry was therefore not just being poetic or 'pataphysical' when he wrote in *Ubu Roi*: 'en Pologne, c'est-à-dire Nulle Part'.<sup>5</sup> He was stating historic fact.



Fig. 1  
 Marcel Duchamp  
 Advertisement in *Arts*  
 Feb-March 1921, p. 64  
 in Michaelsen, Guralnik, 1986, p.48

From the Western perspective, Eastern European identity was, in fact, often bound to Jarry's Nowhere. It was also hybrid. The case of Guillaume Apollinaire might be instructive here. Describing his roots, Apollinaire wrote in a letter in 1915:

There are three Polish writers known today, and none of them writes in Polish: [Joseph] Conrad in England (he has talent), Przybyszewsky [Stanislaw Przybyszewski] in Germany, and myself in France.<sup>6</sup>

Apollinaire's Polishness was felt rather than experienced, which might have been — as LeRoy C. Breunig has stated — 'in itself less important than that he was a hybrid'.<sup>7</sup> For the French, he was a foreigner, but as Breunig has pointed out, the sense of rootlessness made him 'a fine example of Gidéan 'disponibilité', that total willingness to experience new sensations and beliefs'.<sup>8</sup> The lack of a 'fixed homeland' turned Apollinaire into an astute observer of modern life and art, a quality he shared with many émigrés from Eastern Europe and Russia.

Myth collided with reality in the early twentieth century. The First World War enhanced national and international consciousness among the Europeans. Though many problems were shared by every nation on the continent — both the victors and the defeated, all of whom experienced the moral devastation caused by the war — Eastern Europe had its specific problems: a backwardness of agriculture, a lack of industrial infrastructure, and a very high level of illiteracy. The multicultural and multiethnic constitution of the societies in the region became an explosive issue as a number of countries regained their independence. Facing limited freedom, poverty, the lack of an art market, ethnic conflicts, and all kinds of prejudice, many artists opted to emigrate to the West, where they expected their lives to improve. However, as historians have already shown, immigrants often experienced xenophobia and indifference to their art after moving to Western art centres.<sup>9</sup> Or, if 'left alone,' they often lived a silent drama of exiled life, which Milan Kundera would describe years later as the 'unbearable lightness of being'.

Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964) belonged to that wave of East European artists who moved to the West in search of freedom of expression, economic stability, and artistic success. Archipenko's decision to move to Paris in 1909 appeared to spring mainly from '[t]he desire to expand an artistic vision and to deal with artistic issues outside the homeland', as Miroslawa M. Mudrak has convincingly argued.<sup>10</sup> Archipenko shared such a goal with other artists from Ukraine, such as Boris Aronson, Vladimir Baranov (known also as Daniel Rossiné), Alexandra Exter, David Ignatoff, and Issachar B. Ryback. As the expatriates from Eastern Europe and Russia often stayed in the La Ruche residence in Paris, Archipenko followed in their footsteps. He briefly studied at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, but soon realised that the knowledge gained during his studies at the Kiev Art School (1902–05) and his experience in Moscow (1905–08), where he participated in various exhibitions, was sufficient to continue his career as a professional artist. Already in 1910, Archipenko's works were included in the Salon des Independents in the famous section devoted to cubist art, in which his works (next to those of Duchamp-Villon's) were presented as cubist sculptures. In April 1913, he opened his own school, which was located in Montparnasse, next door to the famous café, the Closerie des Lilas.<sup>11</sup> However, it is only after the sculptor left Paris for Nice, following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, that he produced *sculpto-peintures* (sculpto-paintings), which are significantly different from works by other sculptors of the period. Perhaps, to reach a new level of originality, Archipenko needed not only a critical, but also a physical distance



Fig. 3  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Sitting Woman'**  
title page of *Der Sturm*, 12. Jg., 3. Heft Berlin 1921

from the places that defined the prevailing tendencies in art at that time. Thus, the war forced him to develop further as an artist by exiling him anew, this time to 'provincial' Nice.

After producing the first *sculpto-peintures* — the works that Marcel Duchamp retrospectively described as 'reliefs generally made of plaster, carved and painted' — Archipenko was praised by critics such as Apollinaire, Ivan Goll, Hans Hildebrandt, Max Osborn, and Ardengo Soffici, for reinterpreting sculpture by dematerialising its volumetric presence. Later Duchamp acknowledged that '[t]his polychrome conception of sculpture, though not an innovation in itself, was in its result quite startling,' and credited Archipenko with succeeding 'in expressing more than an attractive technique through his new ideas of form'.<sup>12</sup> Duchamp wrote this in 1943, when he and Archipenko were both living in the United States. Although the two men had followed very different directions in their artistic developments for a long time, the French artist apparently still admired the artist to whom he had written in 1920: 'New York needs to see what you have done these last years'.<sup>13</sup> (Duchamp's opinion of Archipenko's work offers an intriguing example of the ways different paths taken by modern artists 'unexpectedly' intersect with each other). It took little time for Duchamp to convince Archipenko to show his works in New York, and the Ukrainian-born sculptor was exhibiting at the Société Anonyme Inc. in 1921 [Fig. 1].

Prior to settling in the United States, Archipenko lived in Berlin between 1921 and 1923, where he established another art school [Fig. 2]. He married Angelica Schmitz, an expressionist sculptor who exhibited under the name of Gela Forster. The war was over and the artist's life seemed to stabilise, both personally and artistically. The restless owner of *Der Sturm*, Herwarth Walden, who was on a mission to promote expressionism as an international phenomenon, and who had shown Archipenko's works as early as 1913, gave the sculptor a prominent place among his artists, both on the pages of his journal and in his gallery [Fig. 3]. In 1921, Archipenko had a highly successful retrospective exhibition that toured Germany.<sup>14</sup> During the Berlin period, he produced some of his finest works, among them the metal and wood relief 'Woman (Metal Lady)', 1923, which shows the artist at his best in endowing sculptural form with iconic presence, while dematerialising the volume into a relief. Deliberately avoiding cubist and futurist fragmentation, and stressing instead the fluidity of the forms, Archipenko gave his modern Madonna a clear and organic structure by assigning equal significance to every part of her body. The figure floats in space, like the abstract forms in Malevich's suprematist compositions, seemingly attached to infinity [Fig. 4].

However, one might argue here that the presence of that boundless space that Archipenko so successfully depicted in 'Woman (Metal Lady)' was not simply a formal device, but was also related to his move from France to Germany. In the early twenties, Paris might have still been called 'the capital of art,' but wasn't Berlin 'the great production plant'?<sup>15</sup> Berlin was a centre willing to accept its heterogeneous identity, built on the ruins of an empire that had collapsed. There was more to Berlin than its being a fertile ground for testing new ideas in art and marketing them: the German capital had the aura of a transient and boundless metropolis in the middle of Europe, in which one could exercise *disponibilité* and expand one's horizons.<sup>16</sup> Metaphorically speaking, in Berlin a wandering artist could 'dematerialise' his or her presence, and live multiple lives or realities, a capacity that has been a common condition among émigrés.<sup>17</sup> It might be that in the German capital Archipenko was finally able to recognise his émigré status as

Fig. 2  
Archipenko  
in Berlin apartment with  
**'Black Torso'**, 1909 and  
**'Reclining Figure'** 1920–21  
c.1921



Fig. 4  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Woman (Metal Lady)'**  
1923  
Yale University Art Gallery,  
gift of Katherine S. Dreier to the  
Collection Soci t  Anonyme



Fig. 5  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Drawing I'**, c.1920



Fig. 6  
Archangel Gabriel, Mosaic in St Sophia,  
Kiev, in Mitz, *Ukrainian Arts*, 1952



Fig. 7  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Frauen X'**, watercolour, c.1922



Fig. 8  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Group'**, marble, 1921, in Wiese, 1923, ill. XVI

a strength rather than a weakness, and that this would soon take him to the United States—the quintessential country of émigrés.

In Paris, Nice, and Berlin, Archipenko refashioned his life. At the same time, he ‘dematerialised’ his sculpture in the round by introducing negative spaces (that is, voids, which he once compared to doors and windows in a house) to denote particular parts of the body. He did this by flattening the surfaces of his pieces to two-dimensional, relief-like presences, and/or by polishing those surfaces to reflect light. For subject matter he clung to the female figure, a central motif in the artist’s work throughout his long career which he mined in variations that often verge on sameness. Archipenko’s figures of women take on the presence of *real* persons, not in their surface naturalism, but in their essence, which he viewed as a fusion of ‘harmony, aesthetic beauty[,] and spirit.’<sup>18</sup> Thus, their presentation is highly conventional, following a set of standards that has little to do with the real lives of women and attempts, instead, to place them outside of the immediate spatio-temporal framework in order to reach a timeless dimension of human experience and its representation in art. In fact, some of Archipenko’s female figures look like fragmentary ancient statues, headless and with missing limbs, forms that evoke rather than describe. The search for a timeless representation of women brought the artist close to abstraction, not in terms of producing non-representational forms, but in the way he treated his subject abstractly, as an enduring motif, a devotional object of some sort, shared by many cultures and civilisations.

Although the femininity of Archipenko’s women is usually equated with perfect and supernatural beauty, it is fundamentally hybrid. By monumentalising and/or dematerialising human forms, the sculptor endowed them with a presence that, strangely enough, despite specific references to the female body, often suggests something beyond gender distinctions (another form of sameness), as in ‘Drawing I’, c.1920 [Fig. 5]. Like Michelangelo’s ‘Sibyls,’ Archipenko’s women often seem to trade their femininity for the physical strength of the male body. On other occasions, Archipenko’s models suggest religious depictions of ethereal beings, such as the sexless angels from the eleventh-century mosaics in the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev. The references to the religious art in Orthodox churches remained important for the sculptor throughout his life as parts of the identity related to his homeland [Fig. 6].<sup>19</sup> In search of depictions of universal spirituality, the artist also looked to other sculptures with religious significance, from Egyptian statues, to ancient Greek Tanagra votive statuettes, to African idols, all of which inspired countless artists in the early twentieth century.

The drawings and watercolours presented in this show focus on the subject of the female figure as an eternal presence endowed with generic beauty. They were purchased by a Russian collector in July 1925 at Kunsthandlung Josef Altmann in Berlin.<sup>20</sup> It is probable that some of the watercolours were first exhibited in 1921 at Galerie von Garvens-Garvensburg in Hannover, which had already hosted, one year before the *Grosse Russische Kunstausstellung* in Berlin, a large exhibition of Russian artists, including Archipenko.<sup>21</sup> One group of works was made available for sale at Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin in 1922.<sup>22</sup> A series of untitled drawings has the verso pencil inscription ‘Van Diemen,’ which might indicate that they were exhibited at Van Diemen Galerie, possibly during the famous Russian show of 1922. During the Nazi regime the works from the three sketchbooks were stored in Münster.<sup>23</sup> At an unknown date, they were recovered by the granddaughter of the Russian collector, and recently purchased by the Archipenko Foundation.

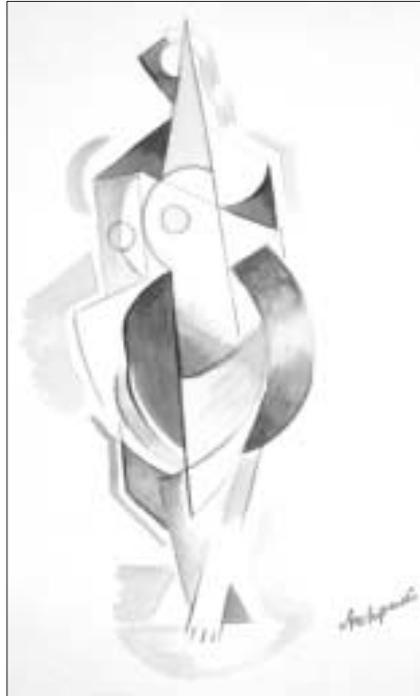


Fig. 9  
Alexander Archipenko  
**'Frauen IX'**, watercolour, c.1922



Fig. 10  
Elie Nadelman  
**'Standing Circus Girl'**  
1918–19 (plaster, destroyed)  
Lincoln Kirstein Photograph Collection, Jerome Robbins Dance  
Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts,  
Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations



Fig. 11  
Gaston Lachaise  
**'Dancing Woman'**, c.1915  
Lachaise Foundation, Boston,  
courtesy of Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York

Archipenko's drawing and watercolours in style and subject relate to his works from the early 1920s, a connection most clearly seen when the watercolour 'Frauen X', c.1922 [Fig. 7], is compared to the marble 'Group', 1921 (reproduced in the Société Anonyme exhibition catalogue) [Fig. 8]. They also display similarities to the Wasmuth portfolio 'Dreizehn Steinzeichnungen' published in Berlin in 1921. In producing them, it seems that the artist was interested in testing how many variations on a particular theme he could make without repeating himself. But these works are much more than technical exercises. There are different directions taken by the artist in each of the three series. In 'Drawings' Archipenko focused on the rendition of the human form as a neoclassical (neo neo-neoclassical) presence visualised in an arrangement of sweeping lines with the volumes softly modelled in chiaroscuro; in the 'Frauen' series he endowed his forms with the angularity of cubo-futurism. In the later series, he appears to be particularly interested in abstracting the figure by relying on simple geometry, which he used to make the body appear weightless. The form in 'Frauen IX', c.1922 [Fig. 9], for example, is simplified to the point that it becomes an interplay of shapes (without losing its referentiality to the human body), intersecting with each other to suggest both volume and movement. In cubist fashion, the body is shown simultaneously from multiple angles. In 'Drawing I', c.1920 [Fig. 5], the effect of simultaneity is conveyed by presenting the dancing figures as if they were three views of one dancer at the same time: one from the side, one from the back, and one frontal three-quarter view. The sense of the rotation of the body is reinforced by the presence of a circular platform on which the figures appear to be standing. Creating a sense of movement implied by the 'manipulation' of the volume, the two series are spectacular examples of the dematerialisation of form, which has long been considered one of Archipenko's major contributions to modern art.

The works produced in Europe established Archipenko's reputation throughout the world as one of the most influential sculptors of the early twentieth century. When the artist arrived in New York in November 1923, *The World* reported that Archipenko 'is considered by many persons the greatest living sculptor'.<sup>24</sup> However, after he settled in the United States, the interest of modern art shifted, and Archipenko's attachment to the figure as a highly stylised and sophisticated form began to seem passé. While Archipenko sought to dematerialise volume in sculpture, other avant-garde artists opted for the dematerialisation of artworks as unique objects altogether, in either the direction of Duchamp's ready-mades or by means of mechanical reproduction. In an intellectual climate where innovation in art was seen in terms of its formal progress towards abstraction, or as a vehicle for social and political concern, Archipenko's carefully crafted works appeared 'traditional', despite the fact that he experimented with Plexiglas and bakelite, pushing the boundaries of modern 'craftsmanship.' His refusal to produce art with any clear alliance to the prevailing styles of the day might constitute, in fact, another 'negative space' related to his work, one that separated him from many other sculptors who are now considered canonical representatives of cubism, expressionism, futurism, or constructivism.<sup>25</sup> This unaligned position vis-à-vis the mainstays of modern art allied Archipenko, in fact, with other major 'nomads' such as the Polish-born Elie Nadelman (1882–1946) and the French-born Gaston Lachaise (1882–1935), whose figurative work did not fit into the progression of -isms along formalist lines. They shared a fate similar to that of Archipenko: early international success, followed by gradual marginalisation [Figs. 10 and 11]. In the history of Western modernism these sculptors have been relegated to a hybrid position; their importance is only now being evaluated anew.<sup>26</sup> To paraphrase Kafka's words, 'dead in their lifetimes, they are real survivors'.



Fig. 12  
Gerhard Richter  
'Betty'  
1988  
© The Saint Louis Art Museum

In the current intellectual climate, which is favourable to a plurality of expression, monolithic readings of modern art are questioned, leaving room for a new understanding of parallel development. It seems that, along with the new emphasis on the significance of nomadism for art, there is more interest in the hybrid aspects of artistic expression such as Archipenko's. Furthermore, as exhibitions such as the Gerhard Richter retrospective demonstrate (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2002), a multiplicity of stylistic expressions in the work of one artist is now considered as much as an asset as a shortcoming. Richter is hailed as an artist who has elevated pluralism of styles (or lack of stylistic identity, or stylistic 'consistency') to a virtue [Fig. 12]. In a more general context, modernism is now viewed as a heterogeneous phenomenon that has developed along a non-linear path. Perhaps, as in Apollinaire's definition of his Polishness, modern art's richness has to be rethought as springing from the fact that it has been largely defined by artists who moved beyond the confines of modernism.

- 1 The author would like to thank Frances Archipenko-Gray, Penelope Curtis, Alexandra Keiser, and Liz Aston for their generous assistance with writing this essay.
- 2 *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1914–1923*, ed. Max Brod (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 196.
- 3 The case of the *École de Paris* is instructive here. In the first decades of the 20th century, foreigners in Paris formed a loose artistic community that consisted of artists with such diverse backgrounds as Russian, German, Rumanian, Lithuanian, and Spanish, which, in 1924, had been labelled retrospectively as the *École de Paris* (School of Paris). The term 'School of Paris' was coined by Amedée Ozenfant to describe art of the early 20th century produced in the French capital, and first appeared in an article devoted to Ivan Pougny (Puni), a Parisian painter with Russian origins. Suggesting the retroactive impact of foreigners on French art, Ozenfant credited the disciplined urban landscape and the particular character of the French people for having great impact on artists working in the French capital. See, A. Ozenfant, 'Peintures d'Ivan Pogni', *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no.23 (May 1924). Ozenfant, the co-founder of the internationalist *L'Esprit Nouveau* was clearly making another attempt at convincing himself and others in France that 'the war did not weaken the speed of thinking in France' (A. Ozenfant, 'Editorial Note,' *L'Elan*, no.8 [January 1916]), although 'French thinking' no longer required a French passport. In terms of artistic styles, the School of Paris was contrasted to abstract art and described as a mixture of neorealism, expressionism, metaphysical painting, and/or neo-humanism with introvert overtones.
- 4 Guillaume Apollinaire noted, for example, on the occasion of Natalia Gontcharova's and Michel Larionov's exhibitions in Paris in 1914 that Gontcharova 'has courageously accepted the influences of the great French artists or painters', while Larionov 'brought not only to Russian painting, but to European painting as well a new refinement: Rayonism'. G. Apollinaire, 'The Exhibitions of Natalie de Gontcharowa and Michel Larionow,' in *Guillaume Apollinaire as an Art Critic*, ed. H. E. Buckley (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 224.
- 5 Cited from the introduction to the first performance of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* in Paris in 1896. Quoted from A. Jarry, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 401.
- 6 Quoted in LeRoy C. Breunig, *Guillaume Apollinaire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 3.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 9 See, for example, *L'École de Paris, 1904–1929: la part de l'Autre*, ex. cat. (Paris: Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2000).
- 10 M. M. Mudrak, *The New Generation and Artistic Modernism in the Ukraine* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986), p.104.
- 11 K. Wayne, *Modigliani and the Artists of Montparnasse*, ex. cat. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), p. 25.
- 12 M. Duchamp, 'Alexander Archipenko: Sculptor, Painter', in *Collection of the Société Anonyme, Museum of Modern Art 1920* (New Haven: Association in Fine Arts at Yale University, 1950), p. 23.

- <sup>13</sup> Quoted by K. Janszky Michaelson in *Alexander Archipenko: A Centennial Tribute*, eds. K. J. Michaelsen and N. Guralnik, ex. cat. (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art and The Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 48.
- <sup>14</sup> Prior to settling in Germany, Archipenko had solo exhibitions at the Folkwang Museum in Hagen in 1912–13 and Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin in 1913. Michaelsen lists also his participation (1 sculpture) at an exhibition at the Folkwang Museum as early as July 1912. In K. Janszky Michaelsen, *Archipenko: A Study of the Early Works 1908–1920* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), p. 146.
- <sup>15</sup> The expressions are borrowed from Le Corbusier, who wrote ‘Si Paris est le foyer de l’Art, l’Allemagne demeure le grand chantier de production.’ Ch.-E. Jeanneret, *Étude sur le mouvement d’Art Décoratif en Allemagne* (Le Chaux-de-Fonds, 1912; reprinted, New York, 1968), p. 74. Quoted in T. Buddensieg (ed.), *Berlin 1900–1933: Architecture and Design* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution and Gerb. Mann Verlag in Berlin, 1987), p. 13.
- <sup>16</sup> To many the German capital appeared to be delightfully hybrid. As John E. Bolt has noted in the introduction to the memoirs of Louis Lozowick, commenting on the *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* (the First Russian Art Exhibition) at the Van Diemen Gallery in Berlin in late 1922, in which Archipenko had participated: ‘To Lozowick the hybrid Germany even resembled Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, and because of its flux and diversity it attracted so many Russian émigrés after the October Revolution — more than half a million permanent and temporary émigrés.’ J. E. Bolt, ‘Prologue,’ in *Survivor from a Dead Age, the Memoirs of Louis Lozowick*, ed. V. Hagelstein Marquardt (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p. xxiv.
- <sup>17</sup> This aspect of the Ukrainian-born sculptor’s identity did not pass unnoticed by the critics who wrote about him. In *Der Sturm* magazine, Apollinaire had already observed in 1913: ‘Archipenko builds realities. His art draws nearer more and more to absolute sculpture, which will one day have to blend with absolute painting and absolute architecture in order to arise as pure plasticity, beyond all styles, all techniques and methods.’ G. Apollinaire, ‘Alexander Archipenko,’ in H. E. Buckley, *Guillaume Apollinaire as an Art Critic*, p. 223. Others also alluded to the heterogeneous character of Archipenko’s art. Ivan Goll, for example, stated that the sculptor played a pioneering role in sculpture by focusing on ‘the presence of something through its absence.’ I. Goll, *Archipenko Album* (Potsdam, 1921), p. 15. Those critics wrote about the uniqueness of Archipenko’s sculptures, but they also alluded, *en passant*, to the fact that there was often something ‘missing’ in the Ukrainian-born artist’s work, deliberately or not. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Archipenko’s importance has been assessed recently, it has been the physical absence, rather than the presence, that has often been praised.
- <sup>18</sup> A. Archipenko, *Archipenko: Fifty Creative Years 1908–58* (New York: Tekhne, 1960), p. 35.
- <sup>19</sup> Archipenko’s interest in refining the female form as an ethereal body has been perhaps most vividly articulated in his visualisations of the woman as *Mâ* (a word with esoteric connotations). *Mâ*, in its various incarnations produced throughout the artist’s career, is a tribute to the archetypal mother as a creative force in life and art, related to earth as the origin of human species, but also to the homeland as a source of one’s behaviour in social contexts. In the catalogue for *The Archipenko Exposition of Sculpture and Painting in the Ukrainian Pavilion at the Century of Progress* in Chicago in 1933, Archipenko had stated: ‘*Mâ*’ is dedicated to every Mother; to everyone who is in love and suffers from love; to everyone who creates in the arts and in science; to every hero; to everyone who is lost in problems; to everyone who feels and knows eternity and infinity’. In the 1930s, Archipenko created a number of works with ‘*Mâ*’ in their titles, such as the bronze ‘*Mâ Apparition*’ and ‘*Mâ Distributing Power*’ (in cement, destroyed), both 1933, the bronze ‘*Mâ Meditation*’, 1935, as well as an oil painting ‘*Mâ Guiding*’, 1935.
- <sup>20</sup> The Archipenko Foundation is in possession of a copy of a letter from Altmann to the collector confirming a payment and discussing two groups of Archipenko drawings. The Russian collector owned works by Archipenko, Aberdam, Klinger, Steinhardt, Caden and others.
- <sup>21</sup> The Archipenko Foundation possesses a tear-off of two pages from a German catalogue with a reproduction of the watercolour ‘*Frau III*’. The copy does not indicate its source, but it may come from the catalogue of the Russian exhibition at Galerie von Garvens-Garvensburg.
- <sup>22</sup> The information about works exhibited at Galerie Der Sturm in 1922 comes from a letter dated 12 July 1925 (written in German), in the archives of the Archipenko Foundation.
- <sup>23</sup> A letter from c.1939 (in the Archipenko Foundation archives) lists the following works by Archipenko:
- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Sketchbook          |              |
| with 14 watercolors | 21 × 28 [cm] |
| with 12 drawings    | 31 × 46      |
| with 10 drawings    | 36 × 26.5    |
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted from a newspaper clipping reproduced in D. H. Karshan (ed.), *Archipenko: International Visionary* (Washington: D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), p. 70, ill. 96.

- <sup>25</sup> Critics have had trouble assessing Archipenko's proper place among modern sculptors, a difficulty that has increased over time. This problem has been clearly visible in the work of art historians who have written about Archipenko's works. Was he a cubist or a futurist? Opinions are divided, and there are many voices in the middle. See P. Curtis, *Sculpture 1900–1945. After Rodin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), C. Green, *Cubism and Its Enemies: Modern Movement and Reaction in French Art, 1916–1928* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), R. Goldwater, *What Is Modern Sculpture?* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1969), K. Janszky Michaelsen and N. Guralnik (eds.), *Alexander Archipenko: A Centennial Tribute*, and M. Rowell, 'Esthétique de la culture: cubisme, futurisme,' in *Qu'est-ce que la sculpture moderne?*, ex. cat. (Paris: Centre George Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, 1986).
- <sup>26</sup> Gaston Lachaise and Elie Nadelman had their works re-evaluated in recent exhibitions organised respectively by the Henry Moore Institute and the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, both in 2003. See Henry Moore Institute Essays on Sculpture no. 48, *Gaston Lachaise and 'Elevation' 1912–27* by Jon Wood.

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