

# MODERN ART COLLECTION

**Alexander Archipenko**

***Reclining***

**1922**

**Bronze**

**17½ × 11 × 11¼ in. (44.5 × 27.9 × 28.6 cm)**

**Bequest of Ruth P. Phillips**

**2005.23.5**

Widely acknowledged as the first cubist sculptor, Alexander Archipenko held a lifelong fascination with the human figure in the round. Archipenko began studies at the School of Art in Kiev in 1902 but was forced to leave in 1905 after criticizing the academicism of his instructors. He lived briefly in Moscow before settling in 1909 in Paris, where he enrolled at the École des Beaux- Arts. Yet he left after just two weeks of formal studies, believing that he could teach himself through the direct study of sculpture in the Musée du Louvre.

The decade following Archipenko's arrival in Paris proved to be his most inventive. By 1910 Archipenko began exhibiting with the cubists at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, earning international renown for his nearly abstract sculptures. He was represented in many international cubist exhibitions and also exhibited in the landmark Armory Show of 1913 in New York. Following his marriage in 1921 to Angelica Schmitz, a German sculptor, Archipenko moved to Berlin, where he opened an art school. They left Berlin for New York in 1923, and Archipenko became a United States citizen in 1929.

As a young artist in Paris, Archipenko began to adapt cubist techniques to sculpture. Influenced by the cubist notion of integrating the figure with surrounding space, Archipenko interchanged solids and voids so that protruding elements seemed to recede and internal features to advance. *Reclining* is a beautiful example of his unique approach to the human form as a platform for analyzing volume, space, and geometric planes. Through his unique interpretation of the human form, Archipenko sought to challenge traditional concepts of sculpture. With their boldly simplified geometric forms, works such as *Reclining* helped redefine modern sculpture as an intellectual endeavor rather than simply a means for copying observed reality.

