

## New Cummer exhibit features work of modern sculptor Alexander Archipenko



By [Charlie Patton](#) Sat, Jan 30, 2016 @ 10:27 am | updated Sat, Jan 30, 2016 @ 10:43 am

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Though he isn't particularly well known in the United States, where he lived the last four decades of his life, many Europeans consider Alexander Archipenko a founding father of modern sculpture.

"Archipenko is of the same importance for sculpture as Picasso is for painting," the poet Yvan Coll said in 1921.

"He began to explore the interplay between interlocking voids and solids and between convex and concave surfaces, forming a sculptural equivalent to Cubist paintings' overlapping planes and, in the process, revolutionizing modern sculpture," reads an entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Now museum visitors in Jacksonville can look at Archipenko's work at the Cummer Museum Art & Gardens, where "Archipenko: A Modern Legacy" will be on view through April 17.

Archipenko was born in the Ukraine in 1887 and moved to Paris in 1908. His early work was influenced by Cubism and in 1912 he joined the Section d'Or group, which included Pablo Picasso, Marcel

Duchamp and Georges Braque.

In 1913, he had four sculptures and five drawings in the controversial International Exhibition of Modern Art in New York, known as the Armory Show, which was the first large exhibition of modern art in America.

Viewed today as America's introduction to the future of art, at the time the show outraged many critics, including former President Theodore Roosevelt, who declared, "That's not art."

While in Europe, Archipenko was influenced not only of the French modernists but also of the German expressionists and the Italian futurists. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1923, probably to escape the economic and political turmoil in Germany.

The work in the Cummer exhibit is mostly organized chronologically and shows an artist whose early work, while abstract, is recognizably human. Over the course of a career that spanned almost 50 years, Archipenko's work grew progressively more abstract in his depiction of the human form, his great subject.

Well-grounded in art history, Archipenko knew "what had happened before him," said Holly Keris, the Cummer's chief curator. "But what motivated him was a sense of experimentation and innovation."

One innovation was a style he labeled sculpto-painting, which combined the three-dimensional approach of a sculpture with the two-dimensional approach of a painting. The Cummer exhibit includes several examples.

Several factors may have contributed to the fact that Archipenko is not well-known in America, even though he is "exceptionally well known in Europe," Keris said.

He struggled with speaking English, moved often and spent as much time teaching as he did creating.

He had also moved past Cubism and, while he continued to innovate, he was no longer viewed as an artist on the cutting edge of a bold new movement.

"Archipenko: A Modern Legacy" was organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, D.C., in collaboration with the Archipenko Foundation.

Charlie Patton: (904) 359-4413