

ARCHIPENKO



АРХИПЕНКО



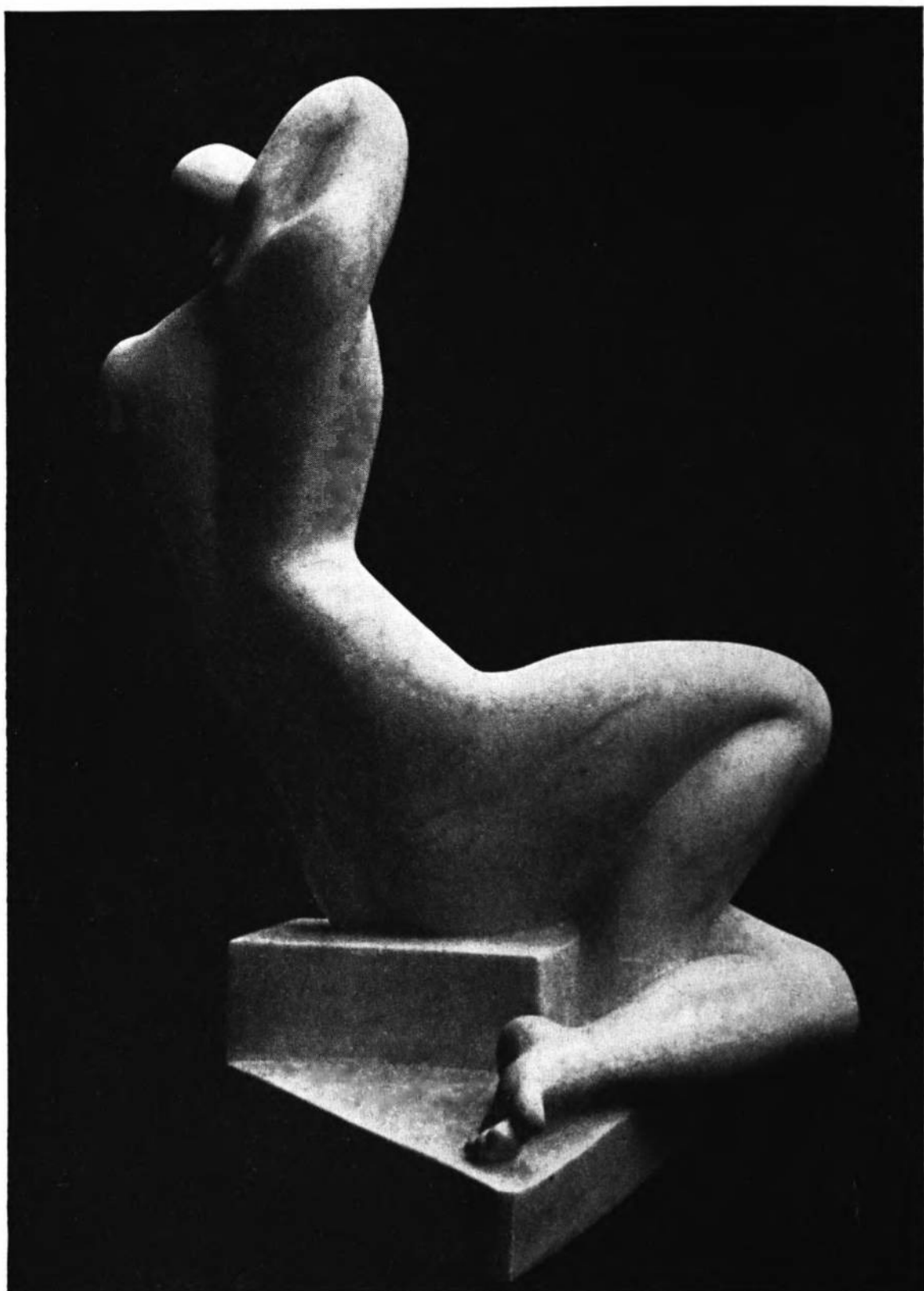
Group. Plaster

THE
ARCHIPENKO
EXHIBITION

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME

INTRODUCTION AND CATALOGUE BY
CHRISTIAN BRINTON

KINGORE GALLERY
NEW YORK
1924



Seated Woman. Marble

INTRODUCTION

By

CHRISTIAN BRINTON

Il faut qu'une œuvre d'art nous séduise et nous surprenne

LIKE Euphorion, it is from a fusion of the antique spirit and the spirit of questing modernism—the magic mating of Faust and Helen of Troy—that derives the plastic inspiration of Aleksandr Archipenko. Kiev, the gleaming blue, green, and gold domed city by the Dnyepyr, was the birthplace, seven and thirty years since, of the artist whose mission has been courageously to extend the confines of contemporary sculpture. From his father the youthful Aleksandr Porfirievich inherited a taste for abstract research, much preferring the mechanical and scientific preoccupations of workshop and laboratory to the modelling classes of the local art school. And yet, the earnest, aspiring lad was not fated to follow in the paternal footsteps. Three things turned his energies from science to the richer emotionalism of artistic endeavour. They were the mystic appeal of the great cathedral of Saint Sophia, with its shimmering frescoes in the ancient ikonic manner, the profuse reading of Leonid Andreyev and the current symbolist literature of the day, and the revolution of 1905, which left its stain of blood and butchery in the streets of his native city.

An ardent individualist, and dowered with a restless inner dynamism that continually urges him toward fresh conquests, the young man remained but two years in Moscow, and but two weeks at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. His true preceptors were his memories of the

luxuriant Slavo-orientalism of his beloved Ukraine, and the Louvre, where he pursued his studies independently of any specific master. The supreme periods of creative style, Egyptian, Assyrian, pre-Phidian Greek, and early Gothic, were the sovereign sources from which he drew inspiration. Ancient art, which survives by reason of its stylistic vitality, taught him to seek, through his own effort, a plastic synthesis in consonance with the spirit of his time. And alone in his modest Montparnasse studio, he proceeded to evolve artistic conceptions that became the sensation of a capital ever ready, like the Athenian, for some new thing.

At first sympathetically disposed toward cubism, Archipenko soon renounced a formula that to him seemed doctrinaire and deficient in emotional content. He preferred to pursue his own pathway in fruitful isolation; and, whilst successive appearances at the Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne disclosed startling changes of theme, manner, and medium, he remained true to the inner logic of his development. He was merely moving toward a purely personal conception of visible form, an abstract, not an inventory, or an imitation of nature. This art is, in brief, what our Teutonic friends term *reine Skulptur*—a complete, organic plastic entity.

His working models derided and even destroyed by his fellow students of the atelier Mercié, lampooned and caricatured in the press by Raoul Ponchon, Léonnec, and Abel Faivre, and his exhibition publicly execrated by the Patriarch of Venice, Aleksandr Archipenko has nevertheless triumphed in full measure. Twenty-eight Continental museums have honoured his art by purchase, and there have been held since the war alone, sixteen separate exhibitions of his sculpture and painting in as many different European cities.

The reasons for this spontaneous reaction to the art of Archipenko are not far to seek. They reside chiefly in his aspiring modernism. If the mercurial Marinetti is the literary fugelman of the modern spirit, and the protean Picasso its representative painter, Archipenko occupies a similar position in the province of sculpture. Each in his way is a convinced, and convincing protestant. And that against which this art in particular protests is that fixity of form which is the arch enemy of aesthetic progress. In these marbles, bronzes, terra-cottas, and carved wooden statuettes, in these essays in constructivism, or negativism, these sculpto-paintings, and drawings in black and white or colour, you sense the ardent, unremitting effort to keep alive that same plastic principle which the creative artist must continually revitalize throughout the ages.

The art of Archipenko in its definitive aspects is an art of pure, voluntary abstraction, assuming its own pre-ordained shapes, expressing its own specific concepts. Released from the terrestrial taint of realism and naturalism, it is sufficient unto itself, a perfect embodiment of plastic absolutism. These slender, rhythmic figures and glowing reliefs live, indeed, in a world wherein the basic elements of line, form, movement, and colour have passed through a process of aesthetic sublimation, and have actually been born anew. Held in equilibrium by logically sustained laws, this art expresses for the first time relativity in the round. And above all is the mystic, stylistic vision of Aleksandr Archipenko essentially modern in aim and appeal. For, in the searching alchemy of his creative consciousness, the boy, Euphorion, has become a gleaming figure of shining sheet metal—the Eiserne Jungfrau.

APROPOS

FOR Monsieur X. to say that he understands a work of art by intuition is about the same thing as though Monsieur X. were to claim that he understands Chinese by intuition. In either case intuition is scarcely sufficient. As to art, it is more difficult, and requires longer study, than does the learning of Chinese. Art constantly changes in its exterior aspects, is continually adjusting itself to the spirit of the time and the personality of the artist. Because of these changes it is difficult for one century, for one generation even, to comprehend the artistic production of another century, or another generation. In most European galleries and museums it is possible to acquire a complete art education through being enabled to study, side by side, the works of the older men, and the works of the leaders of the modern movement. In America the role of protector and preceptor of modernism has been successfully assumed by the Société Anonyme, whose activities are well known and highly esteemed abroad. The sympathies of the Société Anonyme are exclusively educational and idealistic. The Société devotes its energies to bringing before the public those artists who express the vision and aim of their time in new forms and fresh concepts. America should feel both proud and happy at having in its midst an organization that unselfishly devotes itself to a task at once so practical and so inspirational.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "A. Archipenko". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent flourish at the end.

CATALOGUE

SCULPTURE

- 1 Seated Torso. Bronze. 1909
- 2 Fragment. Bronze. 1909
- 3 Black Torso. Bronze. 1909
Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim
- 4 Repose. Marble. 1909
Städtisches Museum, Essen
- 5 White Torso. Marble. 1915
Nationalgalerie, Berlin
- 6 Standing Torso. Bronze. 1915
- 7 Woman Dressing Her Hair. Bronze. 1915
- 8 Statuette. Bronze. 1915
- 9 Small Vase. Bronze. 1916
- 10 Large Vase. Bronze. 1916
Katherine S. Dreier Collection, New York
- 11 Tanagra Motive. Bronze. 1916
- 12 Group. Marble. 1920
I—Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim
II—Städel Museum, Frankfurt
- 13 Group. Plaster. 1921
- 14 Grey Torso. Tyrolese Marble. 1921
- 15 Man. Bronze. 1921
- 16 Woman Bending. Bronze. 1921
I—Osaka Museum, Japan
II—Staatsgalerie, Vienna
- 17 Woman Standing. Bronze. 1921
Booymans Museum, Rotterdam
- 18 Red Statue. Artificial Stone. 1921
Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim
- 19 Woman with Folded Arms. Bronze. 1921
- 20 Black Statue. Artificial Stone. 1921

- 21 Seated Woman. Marble. 1922
- 22 Head. Marble. 1922
- 23 The Bather. Bronze. 1923
- 24 Seated Woman. Bronze. 1923
- 25 Woman Reclining. Plaster. 1923
- 26 Symmetric Torso. Marble. 1923
- 27 Statuette. Mahogany. 1923
- 28 Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. Plaster. 1923
- 29 Senator Medill McCormick. Plaster. 1923
- 30 Madame Archipenko. Plaster. 1923

SCULPTO-PAINTINGS

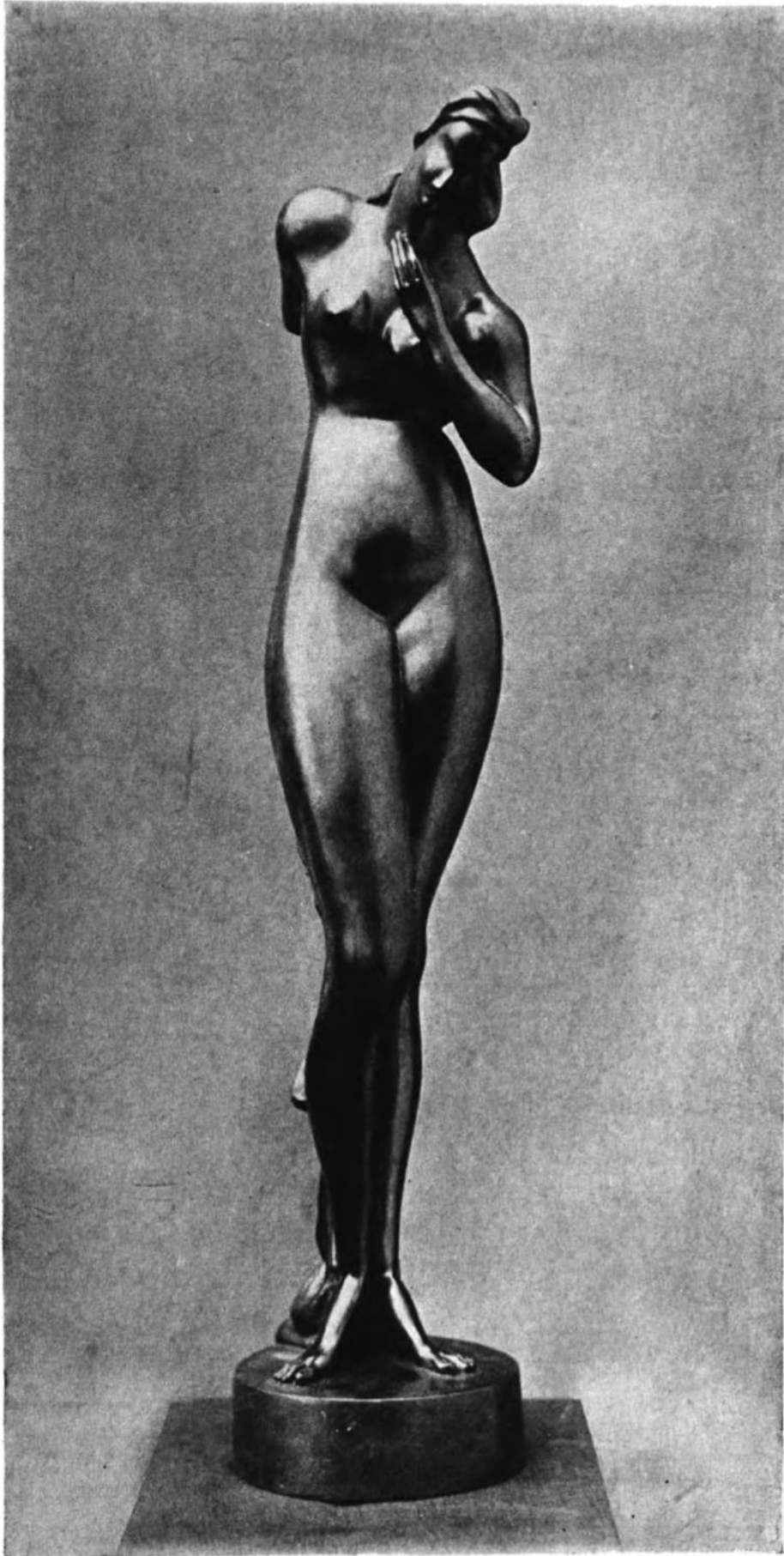
- 31 Still-life. Wood. 1915
- 32 Leaving the Bath. Wood and Metal. 1915
- 33 Before the Mirror. Wood and Metal. 1915
- 34 Red Vase of Flowers on Table. Wood and Papier
Maché. 1919
- 35 Woman and Still-life. Wood and Papier Maché. 1919
- 36 Woman. Various Metals. 1923
Model of Decorative Panel for Metal Room
Lent by the Société Anonyme

PAINTINGS

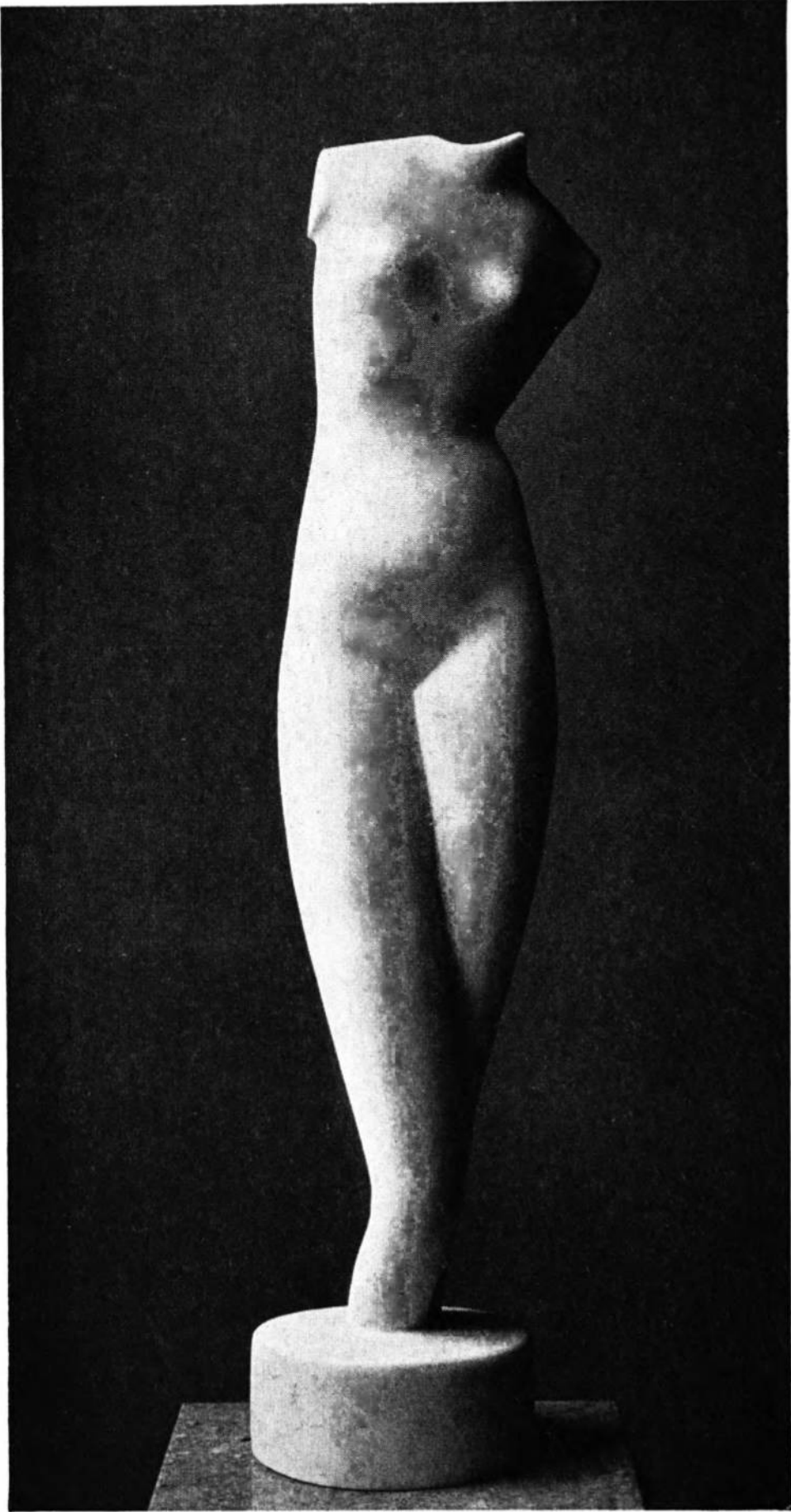
- 37 Portrait of Madame Archipenko. 1922
- 38 The Bather. 1922
- 39 Group I. 1923
- 40 Group II. 1923
- 41 Group III. 1923

ETCHINGS AND DRAWINGS

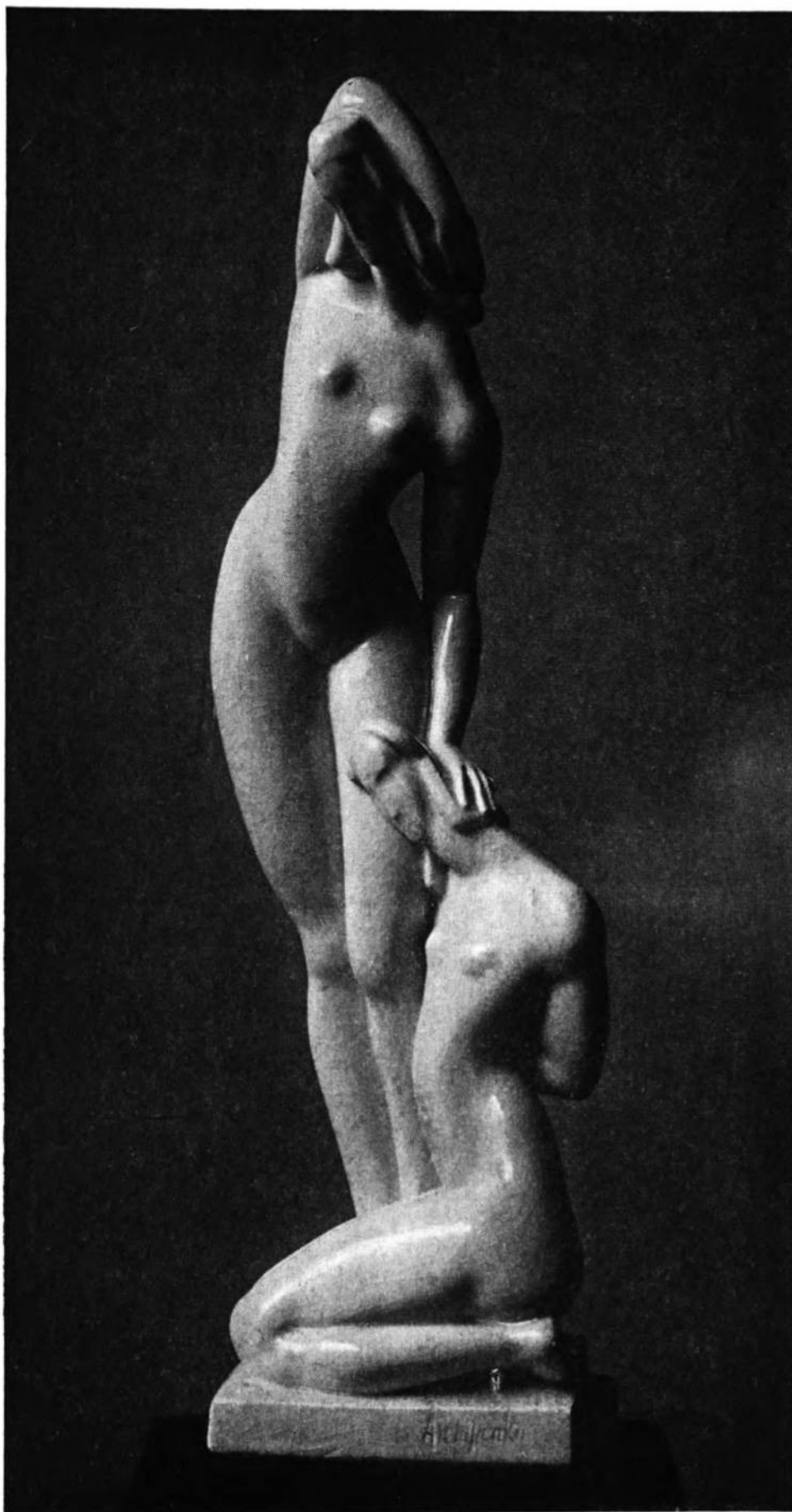
- 42 Etching I. 1920
- 43 Etching II. 1920
- 44-64 Drawings. 1918-1923



Woman Standing. Bronze
Booymans Museum, Rotterdam



White Torso. Marble
Nationalgalerie, Berlin



Group. Marble

I—Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim

II—Städel Museum, Frankfurt



• Statuette. Terra-cotta



Woman. Decorative Panel.
Société Anonyme, New York



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