Arman's art went through various phases, including Surrealism and Abstraction, before settling on creating art with found objects in the late 1950s. He is mostly associated with the movement of Nouveau Realisme (New Realism), of which he is a founding artist. Especially associated with France, this movement emerged in the early 1960s as a response to Pop Art in the United States. While Nouveau Realisme made use of and critiqued mass-produced objects to comment on society and its overconsumption, it used the actual objects, rather than their image, as was the case with Pop Art.

As an early proponent of accumulation, using multiples of the same object, as well as shattered objects, such as broken cellos, violins, or cars that were beyond their purpose, to create something new, Arman's work makes one think of recycling and points to another overriding theme in his work: that of "spotlighting the impact that material waste had on the Earth and the healing effects of athletics and art..." as aptly expressed by the American Sport Art Museum and Archives (ASAMA), when naming him the Sport Artist of the Year in 2003, in recognition of the confluence of the themes of sports...
and the arts in Arman’s work.

In addition to helping “democratize” art and bridge the gap between high art and the general public by using recognizable and often mundane objects, Arman, much like the ancient Greeks, viewed athletics and art as inseparable and both necessary for the cultivation of a healthy mind and a healthy body. This tenet of Arman’s work is apparent in his sports themed works, as well in such sculptures as Venus à Cordes, Venus in Strings, which bonds beauty and music, as the outline of a cello is integrated with the body of the goddess of beauty.

Arman often uses Venus, the iconic Hellenistic sculpture and one of the most recognizable silhouettes of Western culture, that we have come to accept as the goddess Aphrodite, the Roman Venus. In Venus à Cordes, Arman renders a flat two-dimensional likeness of this distinctive work that bares none of the facial features, nuances, or folds of the original, combining it with his ubiquitous cello.

About the Artist

Sculptor Armand Pierre Fernandez was born on November 17, 1928, in Nice, France, and died on October 22, 2005, in New York City. Through his father, who dealt in antiques and played the cello, Arman developed an appreciation for music and for collecting. In 1946, he received a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and Mathematics from the Academy of France. After studying briefly at the Ecole Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Nice, Arman moved to Paris where he studied art history and archaeology at the Ecole du Louvre. Changing his name to Arman after a printer mistakenly dropped the “d” from his first name, he took to signing his early works with his first name only, in honor of Vincent Van Gogh, who did the same.

Having his first solo exhibitions in 1956 in London and Paris, Arman represented France internationally, exhibiting at the Venice Biennale; Documenta in Kassel, Germany; and Expo ’67 in Montreal. His works have been exhibited throughout Europe and his first exhibition in the United States was in 1961 at the New York Cordier Ekstrom Gallery. That same year, Arman moved to New York, becoming a dual citizen in 1973. His first museum retrospective in the US was at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1974, with more retrospectives at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art in California, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nice, and the Jeu de Paume in Paris.

His art can be found in the collections of prestigious museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Tate Modern in London; the Centre Pompidou in Paris; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. His monumental sculptures can be found in various cities around the world, including Monte Carlo, Houston, Dallas, Tel Aviv, and Beirut. He is also the recipient of many awards, including the National Order of Merit from the President of the Republic of France and the 2003 Sport Artist of the Year from The American Sport Art Museum and Archives.