

Museum tour

The museum and its history



© Musée Zadkine / Roger-Viollet © ADAGP
Ossip Zadkine posing in front of the conservatory of his rue d'Assas house.

The Musée Zadkine was created in 1982 when Zadkine's widow, the painter Valentine Prax, bequeathed all his possessions to the City of Paris. It is located in the gardens and house in which the sculptor lived and worked from 1928 until his death in 1967. Ossip Zadkine was born in 1890 in Vitebsk (Belarus). He moved to Paris in 1910 and began to exhibit there in 1911. He mixed with many artists from all over the world who had come to Paris in search of modernity and freedom of expression, most of whom had settled in the Montparnasse district.

In the 1920s, his work took on an international dimension, with exhibitions in major European countries, the United States, Japan and he was awarded the International Sculpture Prize at the Venice Biennale in 1950. He lived in exile in New York from 1941 to 1945 where he taught extensively, an activity which he would continue on his return to Paris at the Grande Chaumière art academy and in his own studio with students from around the world. The museum tour provides a comprehensive picture of the development of the artist's oeuvre from works created in the period 1910-1920 based on archaism, right up to sculptures from the 1960s with their highly complex openwork forms.

Museum tour

View of the garden. Left: *Torso of the Ruined Town*. Centre right: *Orpheus*. In the background: *Statue for a Mountain* or *The Windy Heart*, bronzes.



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The Garden

Some of the statues displayed in the garden - *Torso of the Ruined Town*, *Orpheus* - are still in the same positions as during Zadkine's lifetime. Large-scale bronzes from different periods are displayed in this intimate space, which has been beautifully preserved. *The Human Forest* illustrates the theme of man's metamorphosis into plant, which features in his work from 1947 onwards. The character of Orpheus, who was a recurring source of inspiration from the 1930s, offered him a means of expressing his belief that sculpture is also a form of deeply intense poetry and song. *The Torso of the Ruined Town* is a scaled-down version of the famous monument erected in Rotterdam in 1953 as a memorial to the destruction of the town by German bombs in 1941.

Museum tour

Gallery 1

This first gallery is devoted to works created by Zadkine during his first ten years in Paris. Further works from the same period are displayed in Gallery 3 (fire surrounds) and in Gallery 4 (*Venus Caryatid*, *The Harvest*, *Water Carrier*, *Bust of an Ephebe*). During this period, Zadkine only worked directly onto stone or wood.

As a reaction against the dominant academic spirit of the time and in order to escape the influence of Rodin, he sought out an alternative means of expressing his feelings in forms dating back to archaic or primitive sources of creativity, like other artists of his generation (Lipchitz, Archipenko, Modigliani). The very finely sculpted marble *Motherhood* and the polychrome *Head* are prime examples of the feelings which he wished to convey during this period.

From left to right: *Léda* (1919-1920, marble), *Motherhood* (1919, marble, partially painted), *Head of a Hero* (1909, granite).



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The Holy Family. Concrete, 1912-1913.



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From left to right: *Sculpture of Forms and Light*, circa 1922, bronze; *Beautiful Servant Girl*, 1926-1928, stone; *Accordion Player*, circa 1924, bronze; *Sculpture of Feminine Forms*, circa 1922, lava stone; *Woman with a Fan*, circa 1923, bronze.



Photographs by Marc Damage © ADAGP

Gallery 2

In the early 1920s, Zadkine openly endorsed the formal principles of Cubism. *Woman with a Fan* and *The Accordion Player* display a rigorous use of straight lines which give structure to the composition. This technique of reducing the human figure to pure geometry was a short-lived phase in his work.

He soon introduced more suppleness and movement into his sculpture. The curved lines of *The Concerto* prefigure the future development of his work. These three musicians absorbed in their playing are very typical of the way in which he would base his sculptures on the fusion of the bodies of two or three figures. During this period, he also began to model sculptures for casting in bronze, moving away from exclusively focusing on sculpting directly into media.

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Gallery 3

The Maenads, displayed at the Autumn Salon in 1929, marked the beginning of a new artistic period for Zadkine. His early work had been characterized by a certain primitivism, but he now introduced formal elements from classical antiquity into his work, such as the soft drapery of Greek statuary, skilfully melded with a number of Cubist stylistic traits (flat faces, inverted convex and concave areas, angular treatment of limbs).

Mythology would also provide many subjects for sculptures. By breathing new life into tradition with elements borrowed from the modernity of Cubism, he was able to give full expression to his poetic and human side.

Left: *Three Nymphs*, gouache over graphite outlines, circa 1939. Right: *The Maenads*, 1929, bronze.



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Museum plan



Garden sculptures

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Torso of the Ruined Town | 7 Statue for a Mountain or Windy Heart Statue |
| 2 Large Orpheus | 8 Garden Statue |
| 3 Forest | 9 Plant Hands |
| 4 Rebecca or The Large Water Carrier | 10 The Birth of Venus |
| 5 Hermaphrodite | 11 Melancholy |
| 6 Screaming Harlequin | 12 The Human Forest |

Museum tour



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Sculpted wood.

Gallery 4

Venus Caryatid, pear wood, 1919.



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Wooden sculptures dating from different periods are displayed at the centre of the gallery demonstrating the deep attachment Zadkine always felt for this versatile medium from which he carved such impressive sculptures such as *Prometheus*. In the 1950s, the wooden sculptures with their pure forms and smooth lines contrast with the bronzes which demonstrate a high degree of formal complexity. The four preparatory versions of monuments to poets whom he admired, which were exhibited in Paris in 1939, prefigure the sculptures which he created post-1945.

The human form is overwhelmed by a maze of interconnected lines under which it almost disappears. It is during this period that the theme of the man-tree recurs, which was already present in the figure of *Daphne* (sculpture, Gallery 5).

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Gallery 5

In 1956, Zadkine received a commission for a monument to Van Gogh in Auvers-sur-Oise, the maquette for which is displayed here. Seven years later, he was commissioned to create a monument to the Van Gogh brothers to be erected in their home village of Zundert.

The Dwelling, in the centre of the gallery, is another sculpture in which two figures are closely intertwined, but in this instance their bodies have as many holes as solid surfaces. The energy and rhythm of the lines structuring this semi-transparent work are extraordinary. The three sculptures at the back of the gallery form part of a group of works which Zadkine exhibited in 1967, the year of his death, with the title *Sculptures for architecture*. He had intended to scale them up to full monument size so that their exuberant shapes would greatly contrast to the functionalist architecture of the 1960s. In one of them, a human figure is swamped by vegetation.

Preparatory version for a monument to Van Gogh, patinated bronze, 1956

From left to right:
Floral forms, circa 1960, terracotta;
The Dwelling, bronze, 1963;
The Portico, circa 1965, bronze.



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GETTING THERE

Metro station: Notre-Dame-des-Champs or Vavin.
RER: B Port Royal
Bus: 83, 38, 82, 91, 58
Vél'ib' stations (self-service cycle hire): 90 rue d'Assas

OPENING HOURS

Daily from 10am-6pm, except Mondays and public holidays.

ADMISSION CHARGES

Permanent collections: free admission except during temporary exhibitions.
Temporary exhibitions: admission charges vary depending on the event, with some free admission.

FRIENDS OF THE MUSÉE ZADKINE

Tel: +33 (0)1 55 42 77 20

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT

Lecture tours, workshops for children and adults.
Admission charges vary depending on the event, with some free admission. Information, bookings and admission rates on +33 (0)1 55 42 77 20 or at www.zadkine.paris.fr

SALES KIOSK

Catalogues on Ossip Zadkine, temporary exhibition catalogues, postcards.

RESOURCES CENTRE

A library holding an archive of Ossip Zadkine's drawings and manuscripts as well as an important number of works, archive material and photographs available for consultation by researchers (appointment required).

MAIRIE DE PARIS



Musée Zadkine

Tour guide



musée de France

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Mairie de Paris / Direction des Affaires culturelles / COMMUNICART / mjsDesign (m.js@free.fr) / printed by DEP - Impression Durable / April 2010. Cover from right to left: Beautiful Servant Girl, 1926-1928, stone; The Marmouss, 1929, bronze; Woman with a Bird, circa 1930, stone; in the background, sculpted wood. © T. Langro / © ADAGP