



The Accordion Player

Ossip Zadkine

On display**Title/Description:** The Accordion Player**Artist/Maker:** Ossip Zadkine**Born:** 1918**Object Type:** Sculpture**Materials:** Bronze**Measurements:** h. 473 x w. 188 x d. 153 mm**Inscription:** Zadkine**Accession Number:** 47**Historic Period:** 20th century**Production Place:** Europe, France**Credit Line:** Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This dynamic sculpture represents a figure playing an accordion, with one shoulder raised as if exerting force whilst manipulating the instrument. A single line runs down the back of the sculpture from its raised shoulder, indicating its musculature. Staggered legs, which stop at the thighs, also suggest animation. Zadkine appreciated music and after creating this sculpture took up the instrument himself in 1920, playing it for the next forty years. The accordion was a subject for a number of Zadkine's works in sculpture and on paper.

As well as being a personal interest, the accordion serves a compositional function with its blocky form and repeated vertical lines. Zadkine often made linear works with parallel lines representing floorboards, fingers, or a fan. He broke down forms to simple geometries but layered them in complex ways. The verticality of the upright figure is subtly intersected by horizontals, including in the three lines indicating the fingers of the left hand whilst the right hand is a solid block. This echoes the treatment of the face, which is simpler on the right-hand side as the detail of the eye is only found on the left. The face is suggested on a flat plane with a simple straight nose meeting two arched eyebrows.

The sculpture is Cubist in approach, and Zadkine had been inspired by Picasso and Braque when he encountered their work after moving to Paris in 1910. Before reaching Paris, Zadkine spent time in London where he got to know David Bomberg, an artist who worked in the Vorticist style, who had an interest in portraying movement.

Zadkine posed with his accordion for photographs in his studio in front of a model for *The Accordion*

Player. In the photographs, the sculpture is in the centre of the composition surrounded by other sculptures of figures, heads or figure groups. Zadkine modelled the original for this work in clay before it was cast as an edition in bronze at a foundry and finished with a dark patina. Zadkine carved other works in wood and stone, and his style of working in blocky forms resonates across all media. Other casts of *The Accordion Player* are in the collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Musée Zadkine, Paris (MZS 072). [1] The Musée Zadkine version was exhibited at Tate Gallery in 1961 in the Arts Council touring exhibition *Zadkine*. Whereas other versions were cast at the Susse foundry in Paris, André Susse told Robert Sainsbury that this edition was cast in America.

Tania Moore, April 2023

[1] Musée Zadkine, Accordion Player, <https://www.zadkine.paris.fr/en/oeuvre/accordion-player> accessed, 4 January 2023.

Exhibitions

'Looking Beyond: Conversations between Berger and Christie', Sainsbury Centre, Norwich 5/2016 - 11/2016

'We The Moderns', Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, 1/2007 - 3/2007

'Pablo Picasso: The Legacy of Youth', Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, 13/3/2022 - 17/7/2022

Provenance

Acquired by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury in 1936 from Zwemmer Gallery, London.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
