

Ossip ZADKINE (1890-1967)

DOUCE MÉLANCOLIE (1957)

H : 31.5 cm, L : 11.5 cm, D : 8.8 cm

Original clay sculpture signed "OZ".

Modelled in 1957.

*An identified bronze edition after this clay
(by Gaston-Louis Marchal, authorized in
1975 by Valentine Prax), the first bronze example being the one at
the Musée Zadkine.*

Exhibition reference : «Mythologie et Poésie» Musée HTL, Albi (1992)

Ossip Zadkine was born in Vitebsk, Russia, on July 4, 1890. His family belonged to the petty bourgeoisie; his father was a professor of dead languages at the Smolensk seminary and his mother came from a family of Scottish descent, enriched in shipbuilding.

Raised in a rather austere intellectual environment, he enjoys his escapades in the surrounding nature. He truly has the revelation of his vocation following a fall near a stream during a walk in the forest. As he got up, he noticed a very white clay that sticks to his fingers. He picks up a clod, sits on a bench and immediately, without ever having learned, he begins to model a worker whom he had observed a few moments earlier. His father made him take drawing lessons from a rather mediocre master of the city, then at the age of 16 sent him to Sunderland, a small town in the north of England, to learn the rudiments of his art. Unconvinced by the work imposed on him, Zadkine fled to London where, seeing himself cut off by his father, he lived expeditiously for 11 months by being hired by furniture craftsmen in the East End who entrusted him with carving ornaments. A little discouraged and exhausted, he returned to Smolensk in 1907. He continued to train alone and eventually convinced his father to send him back to London where he attended the École polytechnique des Arts et Métiers for a year. He returns once again to Russia where he begins to make wooden sculptures and he exhibits for the first time in Petrograd a *Bayadere* and a *Tête*. His father, having resolved to accept his vocation, decided to send him to complete his training in Paris, capital of all the arts.

Ossip Zadkine arrived at the Gare du Nord in September 1909. He moved to rue Laplace, behind the Pantheon and enrolled at the ENSBA in the workshop of Injalbert. Little interested in academic teaching, he left the School and now trains on his own. The discovery of Romanesque art particularly fascinates him, especially expression despite the economy of means. He soon moved to La Ruche, a group of workshops created by Alfred Boucher, and frequented the Closerie des Lilas and the bar de la Rotonde where he met Modigliani, Laurens, Gargallo, Metzinger... In his studio, he worked with stone and wood and was influenced by Cubism. However, he never fully adhered to the movement. The 1913 Salon d'Automne brought him his first collector, Paul Ridicanachi, who acquired several works and gave him a new, larger studio on Rue Rousselet. The Critique began to have an interest in him. His taste for sinuous lines became fixed.

In 1915, he enlisted as a stretcher bearer and was assigned to the Russian Ambulance near Reims. Gazed, he was hospitalized and discharged in October 1917. In 1919, he had his first solo exhibition at the Galerie le Centaure in Brussels, then he organized another in his Parisian studio with 49 sculptures and works on paper.

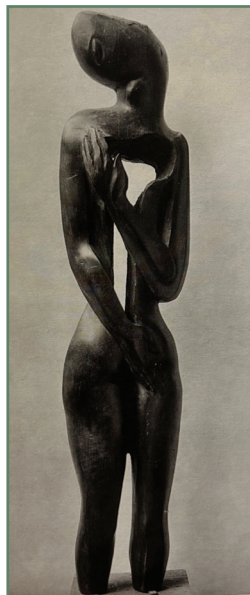
On July 7, 1920, he married the painter Valentine Prax, his studio neighbor. From 1921 and his distance from cubist theories, he became an independent artist, curious about all movements and cultures, without rejecting any School. From 1925, his style was free from



all influence and became bubbling: lines curved, surfaces undulate, movement inhabits all his creations. Sales are rare, but gradually a group of critics (Jean Cassou, André Salmon) highlights his work. Zadkine regularly exhibits in Brussels and joins Galerie Barbazanges. In 1926, the artist set up his studio at 100 rue d'Assas in what would become the Zadkine museum. He began selling to museums (*Orphée* in elm wood at the Petit Palais de Paris, *a Cerf* in gilt wood at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam) and made a trip to Greece that would mark him deeply. He works mainly stone and wood for monumental works.

After 1930, he regularly stayed in Quercy where he could make larger-format sculptures. At the beginning of the Occupation, Zadkine left France and obtained a visa for the United States in May 1941. Won over by a great nostalgia for Paris and its Quercy house, it produces very little. He nevertheless exhibited gouaches at the Wildenstein Gallery in October 1941, and in March 1942, the Pierre Matisse Gallery invited him to participate in the exhibition «Artist in Exile» alongside Léger, Chagall, Lipchitz... He took a teaching position at the Art Students League. As soon as the war ended, he rushed back to France and landed in Le Havre on September 28, 1945. His art regained its momentum. He went back to work and produced 3 of his most beautiful works: *Orphée à la lyre* (1949), *Les Trois Belles* (1950) and *Les Trois Grâces* (1952). From 1957, he taught at La Grande Chaumière.

Zadkine died in Paris on November 25, 1967, when he became one of the most important name in French sculpture and was internationally recognized.



La clef (1957), private collection.

With La clé, La femme debout, une bras derrière le dos and Les amoureux, Douce Mélancolie is one of the models from 1957 where Zadkine emptied the central part of the body revealing through this active chest and torso emptiness to make the volume. This evolution of the last years shows an artist very innovative in his research, while manifesting by this technique his attachment to the direct cut, eager to cut powerfully in the matter. Our clay is one of the most important of the series since it represented the artist in the exhibition «Mythology and Poetry» which was held in Albi at the Henri museum of Toulouse Lautrec in 1992.

