

## **The forgotten Kineton Parkes questionnaires: a resource for 20<sup>th</sup> century sculpture.**

**By Cathy Corbett**

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Two hundred questionnaires completed by early twentieth-century sculptors have recently come to light in the Archive of Art and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum. These questionnaires have been in the V&A since the late 1930s, but two thirds of them are not listed in the online catalogue, with the result that they have been effectively hidden from researchers for years. The questionnaires are revealing and informative and will be of interest to anyone who is researching twentieth-century sculpture. There is also, perhaps, a cautionary tale here for those of us who rely so much on online inventories and search facilities these days.

William Kineton Parkes (1865 – 1938) was an English art historian and writer whose articles were regularly published in *The Studio* and *Apollo*, as well as in a number of American arts journals, from the late 1880s onwards. Most famously he wrote two influential series of books on modern international sculpture: his first two-volume series, *Sculpture of Today* was published in 1921, whilst the two volumes on *The Art of Carved Sculpture* appeared a decade later in 1931.

After his death in 1938, Kineton Parkes' archive was bequeathed to the V&A. The bequest included approximately three hundred and fifteen questionnaires which Parkes had sent to sculptors in the 1920s, in preparation for what has always been assumed he planned to be a third volume of *Sculpture of Today*. Though that volume was never written, the foolscap sheets, containing biographical details as well as lists of what the sculptors believed were their most significant works, offer a fascinating snapshot of each of the sculptors polled between 1922 and 1925.

What happened to the questionnaires in the years after they were received by the museum is unclear, but in 1990 the questionnaires were handed over from the V&A sculpture department to the Archive of Art and Design, at which point the questionnaires were recorded in a typed list, loosely arranged by country of birth. The Kineton Parkes archive has also now for many years been listed in the National Art Library's online catalogue. However what is not at all clear in the current online listing is that these entries constitute barely a third of the questionnaires in the archive. I made this somewhat serendipitous discovery when, having booked to see some of the questionnaires of those British sculptors who are listed online, I was then unexpectedly handed other folders, one of which contained a questionnaire returned by Ossip Zadkine, my current research interest, which I knew was not listed or searchable on the NAL online catalogue. Further investigation then led me to establish that, whilst the online list had British sculptors including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Leon Underwood, and other sculptors listed by country alphabetically from Austria to Finland, the majority of questionnaires, those from sculptors hailing from France

to Westphalia, were not online and these included returns from such notable twentieth-century figures as Constantin Brancusi, Jacques Lipchitz and Alexander Archipenko.

Though the questionnaires could be consulted in the archive at Blythe House in West London, the absence of so many from the online directory meant that researchers were unlikely to stumble across them, and this is evidenced by the apparent lack of interest that has been shown in them in the last twenty-five years. Recent digital records show that since 2007 there have only been five requests, including my own, to see any of the questionnaires. And yet these questionnaires provide an interesting general overview for students of twentieth-century sculpture, as well as offering invaluable insights into the work of individual sculptors. In his questionnaire, which in its final version was written in French, German and English, Parkes asked sculptors to state their place and date of birth and to give details of their art education. He then provided space for them to list their "Principal Works with dates where exhibited, descriptions of subjects, materials etc." Such information from more than three hundred sculptors provides opportunities to note, for example, that all apart from one of the twelve Russian sculptors had studied in Paris, or that a large number of the respondents from all over Europe refer to having been in Paris in 1910. The list of who had studied where and when would also be very useful for anyone researching art schools of the period, or looking for alumni from particular academic years.

It is the sculptors' own listing of works, though, which is arguably the most important part of the questionnaires because sculptors were encouraged at a particular point in their career to suggest which were their most important works. In some cases the sculptors said they had submitted annotated photographs of their works and in the case of Brancusi he simply wrote that the list would follow, with no evidence that it did, but in the majority of cases the sculptors described in often no more than a dozen lines what their most important works were, and they often also included where they had been shown.

The questionnaire returned from the Russian sculptor Ossip Zadkine (1888–1967) was of particular interest to me. His sheet was submitted at a relatively early point in his career, when he had experienced some success exhibiting in London, Paris, Brussels, and Berlin, and had just had his first solo exhibition at the Licorne Gallery in Paris, an event to which he refers in his submission. He also mentions that he had exhibited in Rome, which is neither listed in the Zadkine catalogue raisonné (Sylvain Lecombe, *Ossip Zadkine: L'oeuvre sculpté*, Paris, 1994) nor noted anywhere else, and now needs further investigation. His list of works is fascinating for those looking at his early career, and includes *La Guitariste* from 1921, a work of which there appears to be no other record. The simplest of biographical information is also, in Zadkine's case, intriguing. Literature on Zadkine has disagreed about whether he was born in Smolensk or Vitebsk, but here Zadkine records his place of birth as Smolensk, though with a question mark in front of it which may have indicated his own uncertainty. Similarly, on the question of his date of birth, Zadkine puts a faint question mark in front of his answer of 1890. Interestingly none of the literature on Zadkine had ever questioned his established date of birth until very recently, when researchers in Belarus uncovered school documents which suggest he

might have been born in 1888, yet here, as early as 1922, Zadkine seems to have been recording that there was uncertainty about when he was born.

There will doubtless be similarly rich pickings for other researchers. Access to Elie Nadelman's questionnaire was hampered both by his absence from the online record and by the fact that his handwritten name had been misread and copied onto the typed list as *Elia Madsluean*. He records his date of birth as 1885 whereas most other documentation on him states that he was born in 1882. Archipenko gives very full biographical notes and then writes a long letter to Parkes on the back of the form, whilst Henri Laurens includes an English appraisal of his work which seems to have been copied from elsewhere. Many include more than just a list of works. William Zorach notes, "I am better known as a painter," and Lipchitz writes imperiously that he has "Des pierres dans presque toutes les collections importantes." Joseph Csaky asks that photographs of his work should be returned to Léonce Rosenberg, and several other sculptors refer similarly to photographs of their work, so it seems likely that Parkes requested them. This may partly explain the large number of photographs of twentieth-century sculpture and sculptors that Parkes had collected and which were bequeathed at the same time as the questionnaires. These photos are coincidentally in the process of being added to the V&A online catalogue, though only recently has their connection with Parkes been recognised. There are over four thousand photographs, and while they illustrate many of the sculptures mentioned by Parkes in his books, it is not clear what relationship they had, if any, to the questionnaires. Certainly in Zadkine's case, the three photographs of his works do not correspond to the works he listed for Parkes, though all the works predate the questionnaire so they could have been sent at the same time. There are also many photographs of works by sculptors who do not appear in the list of questionnaires and it may be that these can help us to compile a list of those like Ivan Meštrović and Toma Rosandić, who were almost certainly sent questionnaires but appear not to have returned them.

It is likely, as the NAL website contends, that these questionnaires were intended to be preparation for a third volume of "Sculpture of Today" which was never published. What does not appear to have been noted elsewhere, however, is that the questionnaires that were returned from the sculptors who carved were unquestionably used when Parkes wrote his final two-volume opus *The Art of Carved Sculpture* several years later. In Zadkine's case, Parkes copied almost in its entirety what Zadkine had written but transferred the information poorly, for example changing: "Job and his friends" to "Job and his family" and giving dates of works as dates of exhibition, when Zadkine had supplied them as dates of production.

In the case of those sculptors who did not make it into *The Art of Carved Sculpture*, for example Archipenko, I can see no evidence that the material from his questionnaire was utilised by Parkes in any form, and therefore access to his and those of the other partially hidden sculptors will be of even greater interest.

These questionnaires, considered either individually or as a group, are a fascinating read for anyone interested in twentieth-century sculpture, and I am told that a list of all the questionnaires is going to be online in the NAL catalogue very soon. In the meantime the typed list in the lever-arch folder and all the questionnaires can be consulted by appointment at Blythe House.

ack  
✓ 28/11/22

SCULPTURE OF TO-DAY.  
LA SCULPTURE CONTEMPORAINE.  
Volume III. ASPECTS; IN PREPARATION.

Name of sculptor Osip Zadkine  
 Nom de sculpteur .....  
 Address 35 rue Rousselet Paris  
 Year of birth 1890 Année de naissance? Soviet  
 Place of Art Education, with dates London, Regent School of Art,  
 Endroit et Ecole d'étude, avec dates after 4th Paris about  
6 months in the Ecole des Beaux arts, and  
left it, without decision not to return  
in to any school.

Principal Works with dates, where exhibited, descriptions of subjects, materials &c.  
 Oeuvres principaux, avec dates et où ils ont été exposés et avec descriptions des sujets, matériaux, grandeurs &c.

the holy family 1912  
Job and his friends 1914  
the prophet 1915  
then 3 years as a soldier in the French  
army - "Venus" in the Coll. of Mme Marval  
La femme à la croix 1918  
 Other particulars "Les buveurs" 1922  
 D'autres informations La guitariste 1921  
Le tigre 1921.

all these sculptures with many  
others were exhibited in the Museum  
and Independent Salons, also the ensemble  
of it in the gallery de la cornue in  
1921. I have exposed in London, Brussels,  
Berlin Rome in different shows.

Questionnaire from the Kineton Parkes Archive, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Ossip Zadkine, *Maternité*, 1919, marble,  
Photograph from the Kineton Parkes archive, © Victoria and Albert Museum,  
London.





Ossip Zadkine, *Léda*, 1919-1920, marble

Photograph from the Kineton Parkes archive, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.