

Excerpt of an Interview with Anton Kamp

11 March 1983

Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

About 1 minute and 30 seconds

Like Thomas McKeller, Anton Kamp also modeled for John Singer Sargent. In 1921, he posed for one of the four ceiling roundels in the Museum of Fine Arts murals. Listen to his memories of McKeller using the headphones.

Transcript

Barbara Buff: The first question I have for you is a very basic one. I want to know what year it was that you worked as Sargent's model.

Anton Kamp: 1921 and it began in June of 1921 and lasted until, oh, early September—the latter part of August, early September.

Barbara: Did you ever know any of his other models?

Anton: Yes. . . . His name was McKeller. . . . The real muscular man that was like Mr. Universe was McKeller, and I asked him, I said, “How did you develop this body?” and he said, “Well, I’m a contortionist.”

Barbara: Really!

Anton: Yeah, but he didn’t . . . Sargent made a full figure, a sporting figure of McKeller, and it hung way up on the wall in this twelve-foot-high, fourteen-foot-high room in this building where he was working, on the wall up there, and I saw it several times. But he was rather, I don’t

know, I would say, indifferent. “Put it over there, get it out of the way, hang it up there, I don’t care what you do with it.” You know, that sort of a thing.

Barbara: Pretty casual about it, it seems?

Anton: Yeah, very casual about it. Yeah.

Barbara: Were you or the other models invited to any of the opening ceremonies they had when they finally unveiled . . . ?

Anton: Oh, yes, I was there, I don’t think that Andrew [another model] was there. I wouldn’t have known Andrew, I hadn’t met him. McKeller wasn’t there, but there was a good contingent from the Massachusetts

Normal Art School, and of course everyone wanted to see Sargent.