



Kneeling Man

F.E. McWilliam

Not on display

Title/Description: Kneeling Man

Artist/Maker: F.E. McWilliam

Born: 1947

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Cast stone

Measurements: h. 163 x w. 81 x d. 45 cm

Accession Number: 41269

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England

This sculpture was completed when McWilliam was a tutor at the Chelsea School of Art. He began to experiment with cast stone, in this instance made from Portland cement and aggregate of Hopton stone chippings that had been left over from one of his carvings. The form was built up around an iron armature and then filed down into shape. He used this method, at least in part, because he could carve the form and control the surface finish. [1]

With this and related works, he developed the device of the omitted torso, where the figure is entirely represented by limbs and head. McWilliam's style of dislocating the human form contorted into strange positions was influenced by Surrealism and particularly the work of Hans Arp and Alberto Giacometti. McWilliam began his association with the British Surrealist Group in 1937 but like his friend, the artist Henry Moore, the affiliation was a loose affair.

Kneeling Man was exhibited at the first LCC exhibition which took place in Battersea Park in 1948. This was an important exhibition in the development of British sculpture and for showing modern sculpture outdoors. There is a small version of *Kneeling Man* (no.100) in the Sainsbury Centre Collection, completed shortly after *Kneeling Man*, and also a bronze version. [2]

This full-size version was previously owned by a private collector and spent many years in their Suffolk garden before serendipity reunited it with the small version at the Sainsbury Centre. McWilliam was born in Bainbridge, County Down. He studied at the Belfast College of Art before going to the Slade School of Art, London, in 1928. He met Henry Moore in 1929 and who would become a lasting friend and influence.

Calvin Winner, November 2022

[1] Letter in the Sainsbury Centre Archives from FE McWilliam 11/10/81.

[2] Entry from Steven Hooper (ed.), Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p.254.
