

= The Camel ( Parks and Recreation ) =

" The Camel " is the ninth episode of the second season of Parks and Recreation , and the fifteenth overall episode of the series . It originally aired on NBC in the United States on November 12 , 2009 . In the episode , Leslie and the parks department bicker as they work on a proposal for a new town hall mural , while Ron and Andy share an awkward moment at Andy 's new shoe @-@ shine job .

The episode was written by Rachel Axler and was directed by Millicent Shelton . The title refers to the figure of speech that a camel is a " horse made by a committee " , and refers to the final mural proposed by the parks department . " The Camel " included references to several Indiana celebrities , including Greg Kinnear , John Mellencamp , Larry Bird , Michael Jackson and David Letterman , all of whom have a place in the mural representing Leonardo da Vinci 's The Last Supper .

Stand @-@ up comedian Kirk Fox made a guest appearance as Joe , from the Pawnee sewage department . According to Nielsen Media Research , " The Camel " was seen by 4 @.@ 67 million viewers , a drop from the previous week . The episode received generally positive reviews , with particular praise for the Ron and Andy subplot , and the jokes involving Jerry 's " murinal " .

= = Plot = =

The Pawnee council decides it will replace the town hall 's " Spirit of Pawnee " mural , which has been repeatedly vandalized because of its racist overtones . When each Pawnee department is asked to propose a new mural , Leslie ( Amy Poehler ) becomes determined for the parks department to win , especially after she is taunted by " Sewage " Joe ( Kirk Fox ) in the sewer department . Everyone in the parks department is told to come up with a possible mural . Tom ( Aziz Ansari ) pays a local artist ( Doug Anthony Jones ) to make a painting for him , and he is initially unsatisfied with the result , a colorful abstract painting . When presenting it to the staff , however , he suddenly experiences his first emotional reaction to a work of art . Ann ( Rashida Jones ) , who acknowledges a lack of creative talent , presents a rendering of a park that is widely panned by the others . April ( Aubrey Plaza ) presents a dark and bizarre piece made of garbage she found in a dumpster . Donna ( Retta ) presents a version of The Last Supper with famous people from Indiana . Jerry ( Jim O 'Heir ) presents a beautiful pointillist photomosaic of city hall , but everyone laughs at him when he accidentally calls his mural a " murinal " . Leslie proposes a picture of a historic Pawnee bakery fire , which she thinks will win because it is dark and depressing .

When the parks department casts votes for the best mural , they each vote for their own artwork . As a compromise , Leslie creates a mural using pieces of everybody 's artwork , but the result is an ugly and confusing mess . Leslie enlists the help of Mark ( Paul Schneider ) , who draws a bland but skillful sketch of an old man feeding pigeons in the park . Mark himself admits the sketch is dull , but claims it will win because it has mass appeal . Nobody in the parks department likes it except Ron ( Nick Offerman ) , but Leslie insists on entering it so they will win , much to everybody 's disappointment . While waiting to present the sketch , Leslie sees how much fun other departments had in making their mural , and she decides to enter the parks department 's original mural after all . The town council committee are confused by the proposal , but the parks department have fun presenting it and break into laughter . In the end , the town decides not to spend any money on a new mural and simply renames the old one " The Diversity Express " . The parks department is nevertheless proud of their work , which they hang in their conference room ; Ron also hangs Mark 's sketch in his office .

In a B plot , Andy ( Chris Pratt ) is doing well in his new job as the Pawnee shoeshiner , and Ron pays for a shine . Ron is impressed when Andy actually eases the pain from his bunion , and he later purposely scuffs his shoe so he can get a second shine . Andy is initially flattered , but starts to grow uncomfortable when Ron returns for a third shoeshine . This time , Ron makes an involuntary noise that sounds like a sexual moan , seriously embarrassing both men . After a day of avoiding each other , Ron and Andy discuss the noise and decide it would be best to simply pretend it never happened .

= = Production = =

" The Camel " was written by Rachel Axler and directed by Millicent Shelton . It derives its title from the figure of speech that a camel is " a horse made by a committee " . When the parks department puts together a mural proposal using elements of six different pieces of art , which Mark refers to in the episode as a camel . The episode features a guest appearance by stand @-@ up comedian Kirk Fox as Joe , Leslie 's nemesis from the Pawnee sewer department . Within a week of the episode 's original broadcast , a deleted scene from " The Camel " were made available on the official Parks and Recreation website . In the 90 @-@ second clip , Ann tries to get out of helping with the mural , April looks through a dumpster for inspiration and Ron defends " cookie cutter art " by saying , " There 's nothing wrong with a cookie cutter . You know what you get with a cookie cutter ? Perfectly shaped cookies ! "

= = Cultural references = =

Leslie indicates she had a dream involving American actress Gina Gershon . For her mural , Donna proposes a recreation of Leonardo da Vinci 's painting The Last Supper with Indiana natives in place of the apostles . Actor Greg Kinnear was chosen to replace Jesus , with the Apostles replaced by John Mellencamp , Larry Bird , Michael Jackson , David Letterman and a NASCAR race car , among others . Jerry presents for his mural a work of pointillism , a style of painting in which small distinct dots of color create the impression of a wider image . When proposing her somber mural , Leslie claims tragedy often succeeds in awards , and specifically cites the Academy Awards which honor the film industry . As an example , Leslie uses The English Patient , the 1996 Best Picture winner during the 69th Academy Awards . Upon first receiving his painting , Tom says , " It looks like a lizard puking up Skittles " , a reference to the multi @-@ colored candies . Leslie , upon the idea of putting the best parts of each design into a new mural , says it is like having Michelangelo , Andy Warhol , Jackson Pollock and Jim Davis do one painting . When Mark tries to get out of helping with the mural , he uses the excuse , " I was gonna go to Arby 's and watch Frontline " , a reference to a fast food restaurant chain and a Public Broadcasting Service public affairs program . Ron names his bunion Paul , after the mythological lumberjack Paul Bunyan .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on November 12 , 2009 , " The Camel " was seen by 4 @.@ 67 million viewers , according to Nielsen Media Research . It drew a 2 @.@ 1 rating / 6 share among viewers aged between 18 and 49 , about a five percent drop from the previous week 's episode , " Ron and Tammy " . The episode received generally positive reviews . Matt Fowler of IGN said " The Camel " was a particularly funny episode , and that the parks department 's collaboration on the mural allowed " each character being able to instill their own level of brand @-@ specific insanity into the mix " . Fowler also praised the sewer department jokes , the " mural " scene involving Jerry and the fact that no department ended up winning the mural contest , which Fowler called a commentary on " the futility of local government in their attempts to accomplish anything " . The Star @-@ Ledger television columnist Alan Sepinwall declared " The Camel " one of the episodes he would suggest to newcomers seeking to become familiar with Parks and Recreation . Sepinwall said the Ron and Andy subplot " made me laugh as hard as I have in a very long time " , and said the episode had a good mix of funny , sweet and ridiculous moments , and said the ensemble cast was starting to work extremely well together .

The A.V. Club writer Leonard Pierce said the episode included great lines , strong personality @-@ driven comedy and good character moments , specially Tom 's emotional reaction to his painting . Pierce said the Andy and Ron subplot was " so well played that it threatens to usurp the mural storyline " . Sandra Gonzalez particularly praised the " mural " jokes about Jerry 's mural , as well as Ron 's claim that he ran a sheet metal factory when he was nine , and that " Child labor laws are ruining this country . " Time magazine television critic James Poniewozik said make jokes connected

in " The Camel " , including the Andy shoeshine plot and the " unexpectedly glamorous " sewage department . But he particularly praised the character development in the main plot , in which " each in their own way sticks to the purity of their uniquely screwy ideas " . Brad Sanders of the Indiana Daily Student praised the entire cast , particularly Offerman and Pratt , who he said provide the show 's two best characters . Sanders said the fact that the episode included a " hilarious subplot " involving both of them " was more evidence that the writers have been listening to the fans " .

GQ writer Dan Fierman said Parks and Recreation appeared to be " approaching early Simpsons @-@ levels in its absurdity and comic pacing " . He suggested this could be due to the use of Mike Scully , a veteran comic writer with the animated series , as a consulting producer on Parks and Recreation . In an article reflecting on the Parks and Recreation second season , which became critically acclaimed following poor season one reviews , Slate magazine writer Jonah Weiner said the plot of " The Camel " " can be read as something of a Season 2 mission statement " . Weiner compared Leslie 's decision to submit the quirky collage rather than the safer bet as reflective of the Parks and Recreation writing staff 's apparent decision " to ride their zaniest whims rather than tamp them down for something more readily recognizable as a hit sitcom " .

= = DVD release = =

" The Camel " , along with the other 23 second season episodes of Parks and Recreation , was released on a four @-@ disc DVD set in the United States on November 30 , 2010 . The DVD included deleted scenes for each episode .