

Capturing the Personality

Someone once asked what they should look for in an artist to commission a portrait of their pet. It needs to be an artist who can capture their dog's personality quickly and well. First it is important to realize that our pets speak to us through their eyes. They communicate by trying to send pictures of what they want. Sometimes we understand them, sometimes we don't. We are very good at understanding them when they are looking for treats and love. That is what the artists needs look for when doing a pet portrait. It's the thing that makes them unique and special to their owner; that makes them stand out from all the others of their breed that only their master/mistress knows, loves and can spot in a second.

How do you do that? Artists who work with pets prefer talking to the owners, watching the interaction between owner and pet, talking to the pet themselves, watching the pet's reactions, having patience and spending time taking a lot of photos and if possible sketches of the pet. Since not all clients are right around the corner or they live in other parts of the country or in other countries or they have lost that most beloved pet, this method is not always possible. But, getting to know as much about the pet via emails, phone conversations and asking the owners to take a lot of photos of their pet. For owners whose pet is still with them or just a puppy the Artist can provide a teachable moment with the owners on how to take good reference photos. Thus, encouraging them to take the photos in as much natural light as possible; that way the color value of the fur and eyes are as close to true as photography will allow.

For owners who have lost that oh so beloved pet it is important to ask even more questions. Learn what made that pet special to them and what activities they did together. Was it important for their pet to go on vacation with them? Are pet friendly hotels, motels important to them? Get them to share a story or stories that made them laugh, cry, or both, a special moment spent with their pet. Did they take pictures of their pet when he/she did something particularly cute or endearing? If so, it's those shots that are important to be able to learn about the pet.

All these questions help build a mosaic of the pet and what the pet means to the owner. The best compliment is hearing is "Oh my! That's my baby."

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