

From the Editor

Celebrating the dog in art

by Allan Reznik

Welcome to our second annual Dogs in Art Issue. While we might not all call ourselves artistic, as dog people we seem to enjoy surrounding ourselves with images of our favorite breed. Depending upon our breed choices, those artistic renderings may look dramatically different from their modern, flesh-and-blood counterparts. As sculptor, writer and all-breed judge Jan Buchanan makes clear in her feature “Studying Your Breed Through Art” (page 32), there is so much to learn by observing how breeds have evolved over time.

Just as an art student can't launch a career without first acquainting himself with the traditions that came before him, so a dog fancier should not presume to know his breed without first becoming a student of it and immersing himself in its rich history. Changes and refinements were seldom made without a compelling reason. Understanding what shaped a breed puts things in context for us and helps us make more informed decisions.

As we explore the depiction of dogs over time, we quickly come to acknowledge some greats. Alice Bixler introduces us to a few in “Immortal Artists” (page 38). She profiles Sir Edwin Landseer, Arthur Wardle, Cecil Aldin, Maud Earl and Diana Thorne, all of whom we can thank for giving us, in Bixler's words, “glimpses of the beauty and character of canines in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.”

Fast-forwarding to today's art scene and the world of portrait artists, writer Jan Mahood peers into the studios of four – Christine Merrill, Chet Jezierski, Amy Fernandez, and Betty Turner – for her feature “Working on Commission” (page 44). Many fanciers want a special dog captured for all time by a gifted artist, and Mahood includes tips within her piece on commissioning a portrait.

Finally, since breeding dogs is considered both an art and a science, we asked D. Caroline Coile, Ph.D., to explore that premise in her “Breeder's Notebook” column (page 16). Exaggerated replicas of our breeds in clay and bronze, with dead-straight fronts and sweeping rears, may look dramatic standing on our mantels, but they don't have to hunt for a living. The challenge for breeders lies in successfully blending function, health and aesthetics to produce a pleasing specimen. That's a tall order, and firing one in a kiln is far easier than producing one in a whelping box.

We owe a huge thank you to William Secord and the staff of the William Secord Gallery, Inc., in New York City, for their generous help in making images available to us for this issue. For a dog fancier, no trip to Manhattan can be considered complete without a visit to see their extraordinary collection. Visit online at www.dogpainting.com.