

Seven **Key Things** You **MUST KNOW** For A Pet Portrait You'll Love!



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Should my Pet Portrait be a Painting, a Photograph, or a Drawing?

All of these artistic choices are wonderful ways to immortalize *your special animal*; all of them can for sure turn out to be beautiful pieces of art, executed by talented artists. Let's look back at the three words I italicized, *your special animal*, I want an important piece of work to do the job of immortalization for my special animal. A well-executed Painting on canvas does this job better than anything else. Here is why:

The painting of a portrait, in color and on canvas is ancient, this is where real portraiture started, long before photography the likenesses of people and peoples pets were adorning castles, churches, government buildings and homes. This still goes on today unchanged throughout the world. This one truth makes the notion of a real, painted with a brush, by hand, on canvas portrait more *Important* than any other option.

Drawing has of course been around longer than painting, and there is great skill involved in drawing realism, Drawing is very important to the painter, it is where it all starts, and I draw throughout the process of painting a piece. I believe a good painting cannot exist without good drawing, and the paint application is the next step that raises the bar for me as far as a product that best serves the purpose of importance in portraying *your special animal*.

As is the case with drawing, I use photography to a large extent as a painter. I photograph subject matter for reference, and I photograph my paintings for reproduction and archival purposes, so I have nothing negative to say about this wonderful art form. And it IS an art form, and takes great skill and knowledge to capture a beautiful and unique photo. My personal problem with a photo as a Pet Portrait goes back again to the notion of the perceived importance of the piece. The reality is that most

people have very large stashes of photos around depicting their animals, and these are very special and at times are enlarged and framed. Everyone can and does do this. Everyone cannot set up the perfect conditions and capture the perfect light and mood for a fine art photo, but in a good frame lots of family pet pictures can look pretty good as well. Point being I believe a photograph, no matter how perfect and professionally done lacks the uniqueness, and importance, as a piece of wall art, that a Painting, or a well done Drawing has.

All of these options will cost you money, Drawings and Photographs will need to be framed and protected, and they will not have the durability or the wall life, if you will that an Acrylic or Oil painting will have. A painting can survive for hundreds of years if cared for properly. A Painting will cost you more money; there is a reason for this...Importance.

Having said all of this I must add that I do offer my clients the option of a Pet Portrait In Charcoal. There is a special section and portfolio for this Portrait option on my website. Many people choose one of these as it makes a great gift and I can still provide an original piece of art for an affordable price. Here's an example:



As with all things artistic, what looks good to one does not necessarily appeal to another. There is no right and wrong as long as your portrait portrays your animal the way you want it to. Really it comes down to what you think looks good and what you think will best do the job to immortalize *your special animal*.



What Type of Paint for My Pet Portrait - Watercolor, Soft Pastel, Oils, or Acrylic?

I paint with Acrylics, mostly on canvas. I have painted many beautiful portraits in Soft Pastel. It is a wonderful medium; however, I believe that an acrylic painting is a better choice for both you and me. Here is why:

First, for me, it is a lot healthier to work with. When painting in Soft Pastel much paint dust is produced, and breathed in. I believe former onsets of asthma occurred in me due to prolonged exposure to this airborne paint. For any of you Soft Pastel painters out there, please wear some sort of breathing mask when you paint.

I can get a lot crisper detail, both in line and color application with a wet medium such as Acrylic, The colors can stay as brilliant as I choose layer upon layer.

Lastly I feel much better about the durability and life of an Acrylic painting. I believe it will last longer than a Soft Pastel piece, both in integrity with age, and with a better resiliency to accidental harm.

This brings me to why I believe an acrylic painting on canvas is a better choice for you as well.

A completed Soft Pastel painting is very fragile in support, what it is painted on, and medium, the paint itself. The support is usually a cotton rag paper or board, and the paint is applied dry so it basically just sits on the paper with no binder or adhesive.

To protect this fragile beautiful thing the following MUST be done. First a fixative must be sprayed onto the painting to keep the paint adhered to the paper so it does not fall off over time. If applied wrong, the colors may fade or dull or the paint may not be bound enough to the paper resulting in a loss of paint over time.

Even after this, to touch a pastel painting could be disastrous leading to a smear. For this reason every Soft Pastel painting has got to be framed with

the following: A backing, on which it is mounted. At least one mat, to keep the next item, the glass from touching the surface, and finally a frame to house, and hold it all together. As you may realize this can get very expensive, you could easily match the cost of the portrait itself with its framing. And again, this framing is not optional; every Pastel painting needs this protection.

Now, conversely, I paint on a primed archival canvas which is stretched over wooden bars. When the piece is finished, you could touch it, you could splash on it, wipe it clean, you could drop it and it will survive. I do not advise this of course but the point being that it is extremely more durable than a Pastel piece.

A big bonus is that unless you choose otherwise, an acrylic on canvas painting does not need a frame! I paint the sides of the canvas as well as the front, and only spray a light sealer on to protect from a buildup of dust or dirt over time. I put eye hooks and a hanging wire on every delivered painting and it can be hung immediately. There is no extra cost! Many people do get their portrait framed but the actual frame is all you need, no glass, mat, or backing necessary.

In summation as you can see, though both can be of equal beauty, an Acrylic portrait is more durable, can last longer and is a lot cheaper to maintain than a pastel portrait.

In Acrylic paint water serves as the vehicle for suspension of acrylic polymer that is the binder. In Oil paint linseed oil serves this function. So Acrylic paint is considered water based, and Oil paint is said to be oil based. Both are wonderful mediums, and there are many advantages to both. I prefer Acrylic for the following reasons:

Acrylics are very easy to work with, with no level of toxicity during application or during the easy water and soap cleanup. I enjoy the easy color mixing, the brilliant color options and the relatively fast drying time. An Oil painting will not be completely dry for months after completion.

Acrylics have only been around for 60 years but have not shown to yellow or crack as have oils during the same period. Acrylic paint seems to be

much more stable than Oil paint, and remains flexible when dry. This helps an Acrylic painting withstand temperature and climate changes better. Acrylic paint can be painted on pretty much anything, and does not harm the support; a canvas if not primed correctly, can rot under Oil paint.

Finally Acrylics are very versatile and can be used in many ways, to mimic anything from Watercolors to the heavy impasto applications of Oils.

Having said all of this, Oils are still the granddaddy of them all when it comes to painting portraits, and will cost and potentially be worth more. As with Acrylics, a frame is optional and no matting or glass is needed for the finished piece. I just believe Acrylics will give you and me all of the good that comes with Oils with a lot less hassle, time, cost and worry.

Watercolors are very similar to Acrylic, they are water based, safe and easy to work with. The main difference is more of how the paint reacts with the support, in this case watercolor paper or board rather than canvas.

For the most part watercolors are more thinned down and transparent than Oils and Acrylic, so the results can seem a little less opaque. This is not always the case, and Watercolorists often put on thicker brush strokes but for the most part a lot of thinner wash applications make up a large majority of a watercolor painting. Detail can still be executed of course but the paint is allowed to be absorbed by the support, instead of being adhered to the surface as with Acrylic and Oils.

I consider Watercolor paintings, traditionally to create a softer image. They are very beautiful and will stand up to Oils and Acrylic as far as “painterly importance” goes. Watercolor paintings will need to be framed with glass just like a Pastel piece. The Watercolor paper is fragile and needs to be protected.

These are some differences, pluses and minuses, pros and cons to the four major types of paint that you should consider for your Pet Portrait. In the end, your paint selection will come down to what looks best to you, and of course how the artist makes use of it.



What should my Pet Portrait be painted on?

The surface that is used for a painting is called the paintings support. I believe if you have decided to get your pet portrayed in the form of a painting, that support should be canvas. There are many support options. Traditionally for Acrylic and Oils, stretched canvas or linen, canvas panels, Masonite or wood board is used. I have seen Pet Portraits painted however on just about every and anything, as tattoos, on the tanks of Harleys, truck tailgates, on license plates, t-shirts...it goes on and on. I deal in the traditional, regal and important portrayal of a special animal so I will mainly compare the supports that are appropriate for this end.

Canvas comes in two main types made from either cotton or linen. Linen is more expensive and is said to last longer however a well-made cotton canvas has been shown to be just as durable. Canvas can either be “stretched” onto stretcher bars, or it can be glued to a heavy card board. These are called panels. I would not suggest a panel for a serious painting. A strongly woven cotton canvas STRETCHED onto a good ridged stretcher bar frame is the best and most durable option for your Pet Portrait. This is why:

First off it is traditional and has the perception of importance. Secondly any painting which is painted on a solid hard support can break ruining the image. Even if a stretched painting falls and the stretcher frame breaks, the canvas can be removed and re-stretched. Yes a canvas can be cut or ripped but this type of damage can be repaired pretty easily. Finally there is less chance for deterioration with the canvas being suspended around the stretcher bar frame. Moisture cannot build up and the painting can be cleaned easily.

If you do prefer a hard solid support I would go with a one piece option where there is no gluing or attaching going on. Things build up in between, moisture can collect and it can come apart. Plywood, Masonite and other hard boards are a common solid support for an Acrylic painting. It should be put in a frame however to guard against chipping , breaking, or warping.

Whatever support you choose, make sure it has some archival qualities, meaning it is made to last without deteriorating or fading or breaking down in any way. Also if you are having your Pet Portrait painted on a non-traditional support, make sure the paint will adhere to the support surface and will create a strong permanent adhesion when dry.

Research what the support is made out of before it is painted. In most cases for wood or other non-traditional supports, a ground, or sealant will need to be applied to give the paint something to adhere to and to keep it from seeping into the support. Please ask your artist about these concerns!



How do I choose an artist to paint my pet portrait?

Choosing an artist and commissioning him or her to paint your pet portrait is not a task to be taken lightly. However it is not unlike choosing any skilled tradesman, or tradeswoman, to do work or to provide a service for you. There is a big difference however when choosing an artist. This difference is your subjectivity. If you need to have your golden retriever groomed, basically most all good groomers will do a similar job and you will end up with a similar result, a clean combed out good smelling pooch. Not to say that you should not choose your groomer carefully as well, they are spending time working on your special animal, but if you have three different groomers at one shop that you like you will still get one good result from all three. If three very good pet portrait artists paint your retriever, you will get three different results.

There are three main questions you need to concern yourself with when deciding on an artist to paint your special animal.

First, do I like his or her style; Pet portraits are done in many styles from abstract thru impressionism to what my genre is, Realism.

Second, is the artist's work pleasing for you to look at? You may like an artist's chosen genre style but his or her color palette may not appeal to you, maybe their use of light and dark does not make you happy. Do you want a dramatic, important looking piece, one of my painting tendencies, or do you prefer whimsical? There is no right and wrong in art when it comes to these first two questions, it is all about what *you* like.

Third, this one has less wiggle room for artistic license: Can the artist execute a pet portrait that actually looks like the subject? Lots of artists can paint a beautiful horse, but a pet portrait artist needs to portray accurately, in a painting, a specific horse.

Answering these questions requires you to research and look at many different artists, and many different paintings. Rule out styles you do not like, and focus on the genre you are interested in. Don't just look at one piece that the artist did, you need to see a body of work, the more the better, look to see if the artist is true to his or her style or do they have different looks and characteristic style changes in their work, does their work jump around a lot in its look? How many mediums do they dabble in?

I can paint, draw, do pastels, pen and ink, etc. and most artists have many skills in this way but you get this one piece from your artist so I would want it to be in his or her best medium, that medium should by far dominate their portfolio.

Many artists have the photos they painted from on their website so you can see if they have the skill to portray accurately the animals they paint. Some carry photos in their portfolio for you to look at. And a lot include testimonials on their websites; this is a good way to gage their portrayal accuracy. When you view some work you just know by the level of detail and superior composition, that the artist is skilled in accurate portrayal.

Finally, aside from the artistic issues, you want to work with someone who actually cares about animals, and cares about immortalizing them. Are they easy to work with? Are they professional? Will they do what they say, when they say? Do they take their time with you and your pet? Does your pet like and warm up to them? Basically I would be looking for a highly skilled, nice and caring professional to entrust this job to.

There are many, many very good competent artists out there, you have to find the one that fits your needs both artistically, and then on a personal level as well.



How do I get and choose the right photos for the artist to use as reference material

Most pet Portrait artists work primarily from photographs; this is our main source of reference for insuring an accurate portrayal of your animal. So having the best possible photos is extremely important. The following information will help you take, or will help you choose from an existing album the best reference material for your artist.

I am by no means a professional photographer, so I don't want to pretend to know more than most people. I do know however what I need as far as reference material (pictures) go, to create the most accurate and striking portrayal of your pet.

As is stated in my website, given the opportunity, I would like to do the photographing. Not only because I know what I need but mainly because it gives me the chance to connect with the animal and really learn things about its demeanor and personality. Many of my clients however are out of state, and I need them to provide me with these all important photographs.

Here we go! The camera: you do not need a huge Len's pro model \$12,000.00 rig. I use a simple Nikon Coolpix S560. Nowadays it is really nice to have some sort of digital camera so files can be sent, manipulated enlarged etc... Every once in a while I still paint from an old 3 x 5 print but given the option, good digital files are better.

The shots: I like to have at least 4 or 5 different pictures to paint with. One of these has to be the EXACT pose or likeness that you want me to portray as your pet portrait, of course some minor changes can be made, legs

crossed, ears perking (teach you how to get that to happen later), straightening of messy coats etc... The other photos need to show close up of the eyes and snout, true coat color and 1 or 2 other relaxed poses as the animal just plain old being itself. Most of these photos, especially the one that will be painted should be taken at or near the animals head level, if possible.

The lighting: It would be best to photograph your animal outside in morning light with the sun behind you and shining onto your animals face and coat. These are optimum conditions that of course cant always be met, any cat owners out there know this! Dogs and horses are easier to get the lighting right with. Mainly try not to use a flash as this can change the color of things on the animal. Having said all this simply put anything you can do to show the true color and shade of your animals coat and eyes will make for the best reference material. Flashes going off in the face of an unsuspecting animal are not good either, so if you have to use one, be kind and don't have them look directly at the camera.

Clarity and completeness: It is very important that the photos are clear, particularly anything showing the eyes, muzzle and coat texture. You do not need to use a tripod, most of us can hold the camera steady, just be aware that the animal may not want to always cooperate with a static visage. Always check your shots for clarity. Make sure as well that you get the entire animal in the photo, at least everything that you want painted! If nothing else take some extra shots of body parts which may have been left out of the "one" photo that you want painted. Also along those lines, make sure any characteristic marks that are unique to your animal can be clearly seen in the pictures.

Some extra tips: Be opportunistic! if your pet is snoozing in a cute way or doing something fun or cool looking have the camera handy and photo the event, keep an album, the more the merrier! Use a favorite ball or toy to help the animal to strike a pose. I am not a fan of using food or treats for this, but as a last resort it has happened.

Any time your animal is acting in a way that totally exemplifies its character, **take the photo!** Ears up and mouth closed is desirable for a classic pet portrait...use a high pitched whistle, softly of course, not as to hurt the poor things ears, or kissing sounds, I have even used bird calls to get that look in both dogs and cats. When photographing horses just move slowly and

evenly throughout the shoot, they can get a little anxious about jerky movements and the camera clicking etc...

I hope all this will help you with the photography for your pet portrait. These photos are extremely important especially if the animal cannot be met in real life.....Good luck and have fun!



How much should I spend on my pet portrait?

An important, accurate and reasonable sized, 16 x 20 in. or larger, original painting is not cheap and shouldn't be. You are buying a one of a kind item, a piece of art. A highly skilled artist, working in any medium really, does not get paid by the hour and two similar jobs, seemingly to the untrained eye can differ greatly in the amount of time it takes to complete them.

As with most things on the consumer market, you pretty much will get what you pay for. You are not just paying for the beauty of the piece but also for its archival qualities and longevity, its perceived importance, the materials used and finally, in some cases you are paying for the artists name and the investment potential of his or her work.

A large oil, acrylic or pastel piece painted by a well-known artist will always cost more, and be worth more than a portrait done say in pencil or color pencil by a less accomplished artist. This is true even though the art work itself may be flawless; this is the nature of art and buying art. The good news is there are a lot of people trying to get your business so a wide price range does exist however you will find again that you need to pay more for the best.

Expect, on the low end, to pay around \$800.00 on the average for a 16 x 20 inch painting executed by a professional. This will include just the head and shoulders of your animal and an ambiguous colorful back ground. No bells or whistles or special compositional additions such as the house in the background, a specific landscape, a person etc... these type extras will raise the price sharply. Now as you are shopping around for your artist, see

Report Point # 4, look at the different pricing schedules each has as well. These numbers I am using are averages; you can pay much, much more and in some cases a lot less.

Now don't forget depending on what medium you choose you may still need to frame your portrait. A Pastel, Pencil, Charcoal, Ink, photograph or Watercolor piece will absolutely need matting, backing, frame and glass this can easily cost what the portrait itself costs but I usually figure spending about 40% to 50% of a pastels price on framing. An Acrylic or Oil can be hung without a frame. The frame is optional and you can shop for the right frame at your leisure and there is no need for matting or glass etc... I always paint the sides of my paintings so they can be hung right away and have a finished look.

If you really need to spend less, and we all can understand this line of thought! Black and White portraits in Pencil, Charcoal or Pen & Ink usually will cost less. You can also choose a smaller size painting, I offer an 11 x 14 in. size on my website but rarely do I paint one this small. My thought is if I want to immortalize my special animal then I want the piece to be large enough to be more lifelike in size and importance. I will mention that my Pet Portraits In Charcoal option is very popular because of the affordable price and I draw them all at 11 x 14 inches.

Photography is another way to save, although as with any artist a good photographer can demand a high price for his or her work. On the whole though it would usually be cheaper, not a painting, but will cost less.

Our animals deserve the best in life and I believe that their portraits are no exception. Choose your painter well, and you will end up with a piece of art that will be enjoyed for generations.



What should I do if I do not like my Pet Portrait?

I have no Idea... this has never happened to me! All of my clients are thrilled. Here is why it won't happen to you either.

There is a lot of apprehension when ordering a piece of commissioned artwork, you are paying money up front and are being guaranteed a portrayal that is both accurate and beautiful. Simply put, your research, and the choice of your artist should guarantee this thrilling happy end for your commission experience.

Throughout this special report I have talked about realizing what you want, and looking for the options both in different mediums and different artists that will satisfy your needs. If you put the time into choosing the right product, and the right artist then you should always be surprised in the good way upon receiving your Pet Portrait and not the other way around.

To help insure this thrilling result here are some talking points to discuss with your artist face to face before you give him or her any money:

Ask for references, get several, and give the people a call, every one of my former clients would love to discuss how happy they are with my work and how easy it was to work with me. All good commission artists should be able to say the same thing.

Ask about the refund policy if you are not completely satisfied, is that first payment you made up front refundable?

Make absolutely sure your artist is using a specific photo for reference material, which should be decided and agreed upon by both of you preferable together. You need to know the exact image which will be portrayed, and any changes in that image should be written down in the commission agreement. This is just as important for the artist to be clear on and he or she should make a point to discuss this with you before you have to bring it up. Also along these lines the other compositional aspects of the piece must be discussed and agreed to, and written down.

You as the client are responsible for some of these factors as well, the artist needs to know what you want.

Like I said a client of mine has never been unhappy with my work, but if after doing everything above, you just do not like your Portrait then you should not have to pay for it. You should at least get the majority of your deposit back, minus the cost of the materials used, and no more monies or art needs to change hands.

I would hope, if it came to this the artist will know if a good job was done or not. The key is both you and your artist have to be very clear with each other about what is expected as a final result.

Good luck to all of you on your Pet Portrait journey, I hope all of these points in this special report are helpful, and I am looking forward to talking more with you.



Meet The Artist

One thing you and I probably have in common is our love for our pets! If I were going to have someone immortalize my pet with a fine art portrait, I'd want to know a little about that person. I'd want to feel comfortable that they were the kind of person that I'd like to work with. If you decide to get in touch to discuss your pet's portrait, we'll spend some time talking and get to know each other a bit. I also want to get to know your pet through your descriptions and anecdotes. In the meantime, here are a few things to help you understand a little about me.

I was born In Olathe Kansas in 1962. My Father was a Naval aviator and I spent much of my youth living and traveling throughout the United States. I received formal art training while completing an exercise science degree from Western Washington University, in Bellingham Washington. For the most part, however, I would consider my technique as being self-taught.

My love for the creation of art started for me at a young age. I've been producing art throughout my life, and since 1990 have lived and worked in Boulder Colorado. When I am not painting or drawing in my studio, I am doing interior painting and murals all over the state.

My obsession with the creative process can only be matched, possibly, by my love for athletic endeavors. As a current competitive power lifter and former kick boxer, I can usually be found, on a daily basis, at the gym, also, If I am lucky, and time permitting.... on a golf course.

I work primarily from photographs, which I shoot, or are sent to me. I like to meet with the pet or at least get a feel for their personality through my clients description of its demeanor and life style.

Many of my subjects, of course I can't meet with so the written information I am given is very important. Over the years, I have used many different mediums in my portraiture work. the majority of my paintings are now done in acrylic on canvas. I prefer it's richness of color and it's superior durability.

My motivation for creating and selling art is first to share my interest and enjoyment for the images that I paint, secondly, to honor my subject matter. And finally when I am gone, I want to leave behind a body of work that will continue to accomplish the first two objectives.

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Go here to see some of the many fine pet portraits people are enjoying in their homes now!

www.PetPortraitsByCy.com

Thank You,

Cy Hundley