

Sheona Hamilton-Grant: Artist Statement

Sheona Hamilton-Grant is a graphite artist who works exclusively in black and white, creating photorealist works whose subjects are domestic animals (horses and dogs mainly), and their interaction with humans. For her, the power of the pencil is its simplicity, and its effectiveness as a vehicle for applying the philosophy *less is more*. “Black and white allows me to get to the essence of a subject and show emotion in a clear, direct way. It doesn’t distract the way colour can,” she says.

Throughout her work, Sheona reveals a deep appreciation for animals and their relationship with humans. The intricate detail and anatomical precision of the work, more than just an attempt to duplicate reality, serve to explore the whole context of domestication.

Showing animals in a range of different circumstances—in repose, in action, with other animals, and with people—Sheona’s work illustrates many of the fundamental reasons humans find animals so alluring. She captures their beauty, grace, and vitality—their sheer *adorableness* that touches us in such an immediate way. Her pieces with humans and animals together express, on the most basic level, how beautiful it is when people bond with animals and some of the qualities of these bonds: spontaneity, playfulness, respect, and ultimately *love*.

A signature technique of hers, especially in the Equine Originals series, is to portray a small part of an animal in extreme close-up, almost to the point of abstraction, in order to isolate some essential features of both its physicality and its connection to humans. One piece, for example, showing part of a horse’s face, is a study in contrasts, between the bland functionality of a nylon head collar and a horse’s eye, radiating both calmness and intensity.

“Animals have always been a big part of my life, as long as I can remember” says Sheona. For 10 years she worked with horses professionally, as a groom and rider, with half that time spent working for an Olympic gold medalist in dressage from Germany. (Sheona, born in Scotland, grew up in Holland, France and Belgium—where she currently lives—and is fluent in three languages.)

Working in the heart of the European equestrian world gave her a unique opportunity to fully discover the beauty and mesmerizing presence of world-class horses. Then, in a major life change, she became a full-time mother and full-time artist, redirecting her passion for animals into her artwork. Children and an aura of domestic bliss, of which animals are an integral part, are key elements in some of her work.

Sheona Hamilton-Grant’s work is rooted in a medium that is simplicity itself—pencil—yet this simplicity is a means to a compositional and emotional complexity that would be unthinkable with the addition of any other tools or techniques. In presenting the intricacies of animals, how they look and move and express themselves, and the intimacies between animals and people, she is part of a rich artistic tradition whose larger subject is the wonder of nature—of which animals are certainly the most vivid incarnations—and how it enriches our lives in such profound ways.

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An insight



"Graphite is as powerful as it is unforgiving, as versatile as it is monotone. The day I understood this, the day I became friends with my chosen medium the world quite simply became my oyster (...)"

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<http://sheonahamiltongrant.com/about>

Artist Statement: Linda Budge

Linda Budge is a painter and an animal lover who combines her passions for art and living creatures to produce works that radiate empathy and painterly grace. Her extensive knowledge of animals and deep experience interacting with them explains her uncanny ability to capture her subjects so accurately; and also helps to explain why her work carries such emotional power.

Linda's chosen medium is oil paint and the animals that appear most in her pieces are dogs, burros and various birds; and the wildlife common to the western U.S., like cottontail rabbits, desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, and the desert gray wolf. (Now based in central Arizona, she's originally from Utah and lived in Wyoming and Colorado for a number of years.)

Inspired by her lifelong fascination with animals and immediate access to a swath of picturesque terrain—the kaleidoscopic Sonoran Desert—Linda is usually in compositional mode, taking to the wild with her paints and palette and portable easel. Wildlife, like pets and other domesticated animals present random opportunities for paintings. For every piece, though, there are definite conditions that must be met.

“I love being pulled into a painting that has a story, perhaps a mystery,” says Linda. “Above all, the dramatic play of light, the way it flows from one object to another, is what draws me deeper into a composition. That's how a subject announces itself to me, and in turn I want that painting to capture the viewer's rapt attention.”

Every animal depicted in Linda's paintings is an individual creature, with a distinctive personality, conveyed through its attitude, expression, and habitat.

“I try to pull the essence from an animal and put it on canvass,” says Linda. When I choose an animal, I want to paint, I study it as closely as I can—its features, its habits, its environment—and focus on the qualities it has that really stand out.”

Linda's ability to depict the nuances of animals so precisely is no accident. Her love of animals and intuitive relationship with them allows her to forge an emotional connection with her subjects, which comes across clearly in the painting. Also, she has practical and academic experience with animals, including a stint handling show dogs professionally, some courses in anatomy, and wide exposure to the minutiae of animals in their natural habitat.

Linda has won numerous awards for her work, and pieces of hers can be found in the permanent collections of several libraries, museums, and corporations. One of her highest honors was a painting commissioned in 1983 by the State of Wyoming as a gift to President Reagan, with Linda herself presenting it to the President. The painting, of an antelope, hung for many years in the living room of the President's California residence, and was then moved to the Reagan Library in Simi Valley where it remains to this day.

Linda Budge has spent a lifetime honing her skills as a painter and cultivating her love for animals. Every new picture and every interaction with another four-legged friend has enhanced her knowledge of these creatures and her ability to portray them; and has provided those fortunate enough to have seen her work a unique, even revelatory glimpse into the animal kingdom.

Linda Budge

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<http://www.lindabudge.com/the-artist/>