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Shannon Abbey Contemporary Painter /Illustrator Launches New Website to Focus on Commissioned Animal Portraits

To Survive, an Artist Must Think on Her Feet

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PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA – One Sunday night, early in April, Abbey was chopping vegetables and started a watch party on Facebook to view different musicians and entertainers performing in their living rooms, and backyards. Steve Martin played the banjo, Patrick Stewart read sonnets, Mary Chapin Carpenter sang and played the guitar, Anthony Hopkins played piano with his cat on his lap, and Ronnie Wood talked about his 12 Step recovery journey sitting on the steps of a caravan on his Irish estate.

The next morning, Abbey had an idea to do something similar. Asking her 17-year old son to be her videographer, she invited her Facebook followers to post photos of their pets. Abbey chose from the best of the photos and went to work with pastels, capturing her process using Facebook Live, or time-lapse video from her studio. When she had finished with the portrait and the video, she would then post it on Facebook and Instagram. What began with just her followers soon spread to pet lovers and show dog enthusiasts throughout social media.

"Since April 15," she says, "I've painted more than 60 pastel portraits. People seem to really enjoy watching these portraits emerge. And I love doing them."

An experienced illustrator and graduate of Academy of Art University in San Francisco, the classically trained Shannon Abbey has painted over 100 oil and acrylic paintings of animals since the early 1990s. Elephants, giraffes, chickens, goats, a turkey, a horse, rabbits, assorted songbirds, hummingbirds, an ostrich, a rainbow trout, cows, a polar bear, a koala, a red snapper, other fish and of course, many, many commissions of people's cats and dogs.

"Acrylics take a long time to produce," Abbey explains, "because of all the layering of paint that's required to capture the lovable, furry faces of dogs and cats. With pastels, I can work much faster and offer an affordable and original piece of artwork to my clients. No Photoshop filters, or computer-generated reproductions are used to create my pastels, or paintings," Abbey says with a grin.

Before COVID and the economic downturn Abbey's corporate work often included watercolor portraits of well-known people, like Al Gore and George Bush, when they were the presidential candidates in 2000. The educational publishing company that commissioned the portraits then incorporated them into their presidential collection that was sold to hang in school classrooms.

To survive these days, an artist must think on her feet...

New Studio Website Launched

This month, Shannon Abbey announced the launched of her new website, <http://www.shannonabbey.com> The site features the artist's work as an illustrator and painter and includes an e-commerce store for purchasing her contemporary pet portraits, past commissioned work, and a virtual studio where teaches classes on Zoom and posts her live action pastel drawing video's from Facebook.

About Shannon Abbey

Abbey was born in Eugene, Oregon, and raised in Pullman, Washington. She graduated from Western Washington University in Bellingham with a degree in visual communications. While at Western, she took a figure drawing class and quickly discovered that drawing was her talent. After college, Abbey attended the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. Fresh out of school her first job was working for I. Magnin creating quick pastel portraits of women for the store's cosmetics promotions. She moved on from there to Neiman-Marcus, Tiffany & Co. and other luxury retailers.

Shannon Abbey is best known for her expressive and vivid animal portraiture. Her masterful painting style, her strong drawing skills and her ability to capture the inner and outer personality of her subjects, makes her pet portraits much more than a likeness of a beloved family member.

Shannon is inspired by the traditional techniques of Old Masters Portraiture and Contemporary Realism of Northern California. Her paintings are exhibited in numerous private collections and collectors include some of the top dog breeders in the United States, Australia and in the United Kingdom.

An artist member of the AKC Museum of the Dog, Shannon Abbey was chosen as the official artist of the postponed Cavaliers of the West Specialty Show for 2020.

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