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CULTURED CANINES

MARIANNE BERGERON

Cultured Canines is a temporary display exploring the history and mythologies of different dog breeds and the stories they share with humans. The domestication of dogs has a very long history that goes back at least 15,000 years. Furthermore, modern dog breeds are defined by their distinctive historical and contemporary human-canine relationships.

It is a seemingly typical workday in the shearing shed where two young women are busy shearing two Salish wool dogs. The scene appears on the side of a black-figure *epinetron* (see page 24), an Ancient Greek tool used as a thigh guard during the preparation of wool for weaving. The Salish dog breed may be extinct, but their memory lives on through the colourful blankets produced by the Coast Salish peoples in north-western North America and for which their fur was once required.

Black-Figure Amherst Hydria [Saluki].

Vase design by

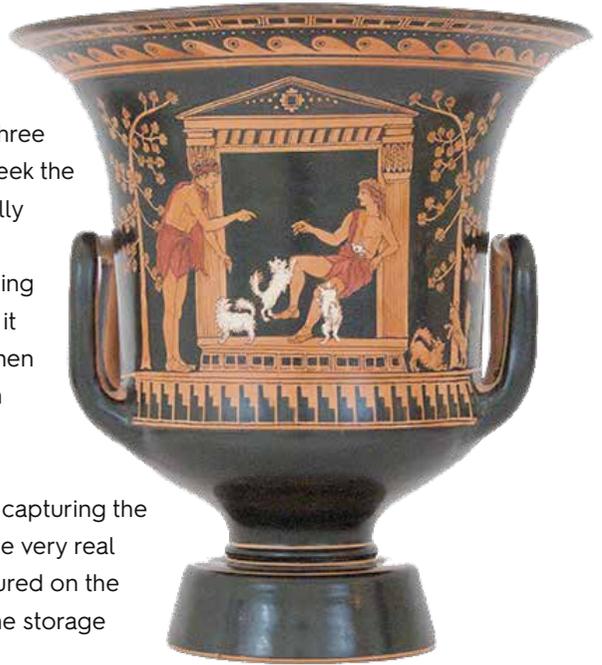
Allison Ksiazkiewicz.

Vase painting by Allison Ksiazkiewicz and Vicky Xyda-Ralli.

On one side of a red-figure *volute-krater*, three tiny, bright white Chihuahuas desperately seek the attention of two young men who are casually relaxing and deep in conversation. This all-important wine-mixing vessel was used during symposia and other types of banquets and it was precisely during such occasions, that men had the opportunity to relax and engage in lively debates.

A Deerhound, fast asleep and dreaming of capturing the mythical unicorn, is naturally oblivious to the very real deer standing a safe distance away, as pictured on the side of a black-figure *belly-amphora* or wine storage vessel.

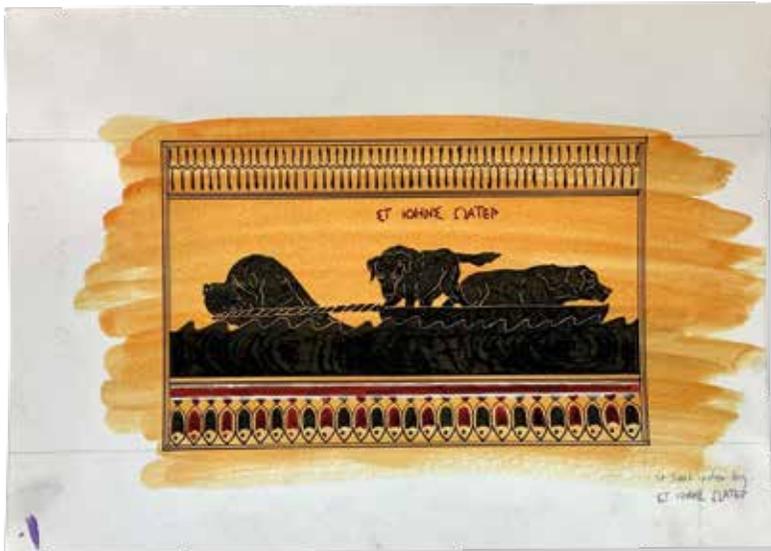
A large Newfoundland Dog swims while pulling a raft that carries its ancestors on the inside of the neck of a black-figure *dinos*, another wine-mixing vessel which, once filled, would leave the viewer with the impression that the dog is swimming in wine.



Red-figure Watson Volute-Krater [Chihuahua]. Vase design by **Eleni Aloupi-Siotis**. Vase painting by Vicky Xyda-Ralli after Allison Ksiazkiewicz.

St Johns Dog: Black-figure Newfoundland Dog Dinos, preparatory sketch.

A Newfoundland Dog pulls a boat containing his ancestors: the St Johns Dog (extinct) is the foundation breed for the Newfoundland Dog.





These are just some of the scenes featured in *Cultured Canines*. The display explores the mythology built into the identity and the cultural meaning of different dog breeds in a way that is both absurd and critical. It also inspires the viewer to think about the different cultures that inform how the histories and lives of animals are perceived, and to appreciate the actual and imagined roles animals play in our lives.

Why, you might ask, on Ancient Greek-style vases? During the Age of Enlightenment, these highly-decorated vessels were considered tremendously desirable and valuable additions to the natural history cabinets often found in the homes of those who could afford them and who hoped to establish their own socioeconomic status within society. These cabinets aimed to assemble an all-encompassing view of Nature, and often included art objects as an extension of the laws and order found in the natural world. *Cultured Canines* speaks directly to the entwined history of art and science.

These black- and red-figure Classically-inspired vases were created by Allison Ksiazkiewicz in collaboration with Attic Black | Thetis Authenticity Workshop. As a work in progress, *Cultured Canines* is part of a larger scale project. Once completed, the project will comprise of a total of 12 vases, 20 editions of 15 intaglio prints, as well as an illustrated catalogue of short essays. ■

Epinetron: Red-Figure Woolly Salish Dog Epinetron, in progress.
Vase design and painting by **Allison Ksiazkiewicz**.
Vase construction and relief work by **Angelliki Dervenioti** and **Iphigenia Nalbani**.

The viewer will be inspired to think about the different cultures that inform how the histories and lives of animals are perceived, and to appreciate the actual and imagined roles animals play in our lives.

Cultured Canines will be on display until 31 October 2021.