
CULTURE

JOIE DE VIVRE

LES ARTISTES

portraits on all fours

After failing to find her niche painting people, Breaux Bridge artist Logan Berard focused her efforts on furrier subjects — pets

BY WILLIAM KALEC | PHOTOS
BY ROMERO & ROMERO

IF LOGAN BERARD WAS A revisionist, much of the story of her artistic journey might be stricken from the record and the record might be tossed into the bayou. Berard's wonky self-portraits; how she proclaims to be "the worst" at painting people; and the part about a nameless cow in a glossy magazine who serves as the North Star to this distinctive Acadiana artist — these details would vanish. Thank goodness she's not a revisionist, because when asked how she got into painting dogs and cats and horses and llamas and ostriches, what emerges is a self-deprecating tale of persistence — and maybe also a pinch of luck.

On average, it takes Logan Berard two to three weeks to complete one of her signature pet portraits.





To see more of Logan Berard's work, visit lbpaintings.com

After deciding that interior design — her major at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette — wasn't her thing, Berard transitioned into becoming a portrait artist. There was just one hiccup: painting people, Berard realized, is extremely difficult. Undeterred, Berard enrolled in a local art class headed by local legend Darryl "Demo" Demourelle, a bit of a portrait whisperer in art circles. Berard's assignment from Demo was simple, paint a self-portrait.

"After five weeks, I'm like, 'Oh, I'm done with this,'" Berard says. "The eyelashes are what got me."

With more than a month's worth of work essentially on the scrap heap, Berard flipped through the pages of a magazine and saw an advertisement featuring a cow shot with a wide-angle lens. It looked cool, so Berard painted it.

"It came so easy, and really, I have no idea why," Berard says. "It took me five weeks to not even finish that self-portrait, and this thing took me an hour. And that pretty much began my accidental career."

Well, sort of. Not long after that, while working as a waitress at brunch mecca Cafe Des

Amis, which decorates its walls monthly with the work of a selected local artist, the head chef approached Berard and invited her to hang her animal paintings. Most of the pieces were purchased before the calendar turned over, leading Berard to believe she finally found her artistic niche.

"People asked the other waiters and staff, 'Oh, who's the artist?' And then they'd point to me," Berard says. "They talked to me and ask me about my work and a few went on to wonder if I did pet portraits, and I said sure, even though I

had never done it. So this lady from Lafayette wanted me to do a portrait of her pugs, and it just went from there.

"I'm a pet lover just like my clients, so I get why they'd want their cat or dog captured in this manner," Berard says. "I don't think it's too much to say that for a lot of us, our pets are our children. So I get it — they wanted to have someone they love immortalized."

Berard receives commission work from across the country, some from clients wishing to capture their canine's spirit while they're still scurrying



around the backyard while others want a posthumous keepsake of their pet. Because the option of painting in person usually requires more than a tank of gas (plus, dogs and cats aren't as good as humans at holding a pose) Berard does portraits exclusively from photographs, though she doesn't necessarily mimic the pose from a singular photo.

In addition, Berard asks for a brief description of the pet, specifically its temperament and personality. For some, this is a sentence or two. For other owners, it's their opus

— a chance to wax poetic for paragraphs or even pages about their furry friend.

"It's like I've known their dogs for years because they go on and on about them," Berard says. "No detail is left out. Like, my cat loves saltine crackers, and those are the types of details people share with me. I mean, I'd share that if my cat was getting painted.

"I don't know how this happens, but a lot of clients comment how the pet's personality shines through in my portraits," Berard says. "When I paint animals, I get to know

them. If you tell me you've got a happy, energetic dog, well then he's gonna look happy and energetic in the painting. Or if you have a laid-back basset hound that is kind of lazy, you'd want them to be portrayed that way."

On average, it takes Berard two to three weeks to complete a portrait. Along the way, pictures are sent to the buyer to update progress and confirm that the spirit and presentation of the pet are on point. Typically, any asked-for adjustments are minor details — slightly changing the color of fur or length of the coat, those sorts of

things. With that established, though, Berard remains her harshest critic, which might explain why she's never painted her own pets.

In a couple weeks, however, that will change once Maude, Ethel, Agnes, Gladys and Louise — Berard's group of baby chicks — are captured on canvas.

"They're going to be model chickens," Berard says. "Trust me, they're going to be painted...once they get their big-girl feathers." ◀



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