

Creepy Critters

Last edition of Urban Animal, we ran a pictorial called Feline Fotos, depicting 'painted cats'. The images actually came from a hard cover book called 'Why Paint Cats: The Ethics of Feline Aesthetics'. Published back in 1994, the book poked fun at the art-world tongue firmly planted in cheek with its haughty descriptions. For instance the cat painted like a fish "...succeeds in redefining and blurring the relationship between fur and scale, fin and tail, in order to create a shared intent that transubstantiates the species and repositions the notion of symbiosis." And if you start believing what you're seeing then surely the author-New Zealand cartoonist Burton Silver-threw in some fanciful information about each artist:

Artist: Flavia Venezia, New York
 "...An earlier work, "Tortellini per sempre," 2000, which featured an intricate web of delicate pasta patterns on a Cream Tonkinese... was awarded the H.B. Saeed Mohammed Al Paganbani Prize for Decorated Food, in the mistaken belief that Italians eat cats."

'Why Paint Cats' succeeded in sucking people in-especially if you believe some of the comments left on the official home page from enthusiastic supporters "Unfortunately, trying to carefully control and paint two very wilful and in the end very angry cats was an experience akin to swimming freestyle through a very large and thick tangle of blackberry while having buckets of dye thrown at you..."

Or one of the many angry missives such as this, "I thought it was amazing that cats paint pictures. But this book about people painting their cats is cruel. For one, how do they know they want to be painted, and does it wash off?"



Bunnog by Martin Cook - HumanDescent.com

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Chitten from MundoLopez.com, Photoshoppix.com, FreakingNews.com



Cat-gull from MundoLopez.com, Photoshoppix.com, FreakingNews.com



KittyBird from MundoLopez.com, Photoshoppix.com, FreakingNews.com

Hoaxes can be a lot of fun if they're not criminal. Illusions can be entrancing if they appear to be real. Through the ages, art has often been illusory from the eyes of Mona Lisa to the trompe l'oeil (trick the eye) 3-D technique to abstract paintings. But today, just about anyone can take computer images and alter them to be arresting, odd or totally bizarre, not to mention creepy.



Polly Wants a Bone - Worth1000.com

We found these 'Creepy Critters' when a colleague sent the 'Polly Wants a Bone' picture in response to the obvious scam on an Australian pet trading site (see Tidbits page 4-9) where the seller is first selling two Chihuahua puppies then later mentions two parrots. The digitally manipulated image of this special 'Polly Wants a Bone' species made us search through sites like Photoshoppix.com, Freakingnews.com and Worth1000 to find these other images. Reminiscent of the disturbing experiments of H.G. Wells' Dr Moreau, they showcase the imaginative and quite twisted concept that these clever artists have engineered.



Puffyparrotz by Chris Harris - Photoshoppix.com

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My Elephants was created by perroloco for an art contest at Worth1000.com using Worth1000's new browser-based editing software, Aviary.com



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Creepy Critters continued...



Ratbear from MundoLopez.com, Photoshoppix.com, FreakingNews.com



Snoose by Göran Forsberg - www.jgg.se

A Dog of a Name

By Lisa Treen



From the garage came a loud whining and yowling, so loud that it could only mean that one of the puppies in the whelping box was in distress. The breeders raced into the garage to find one of the puppies exercising his lungs for no other reason than to let the world and his littermates know he was there. His additional strutting and posturing earned him the name Mickey—after Mick Jagger for the large lips and vocal abilities. This was how my first dog got his name. Since I work in the music industry and am a fan of the Stones, I was thrilled that Mick had been named after such an enduring rock god.

I shortened it to Mick because Mickey just seemed a little too cute and reminded me more of a cartoon mouse with a high-pitched voice—nothing like this raucous yowler. Four years later I decided to get another dog, a female, liver-spot Dalmatian. There was much conversation and brainstorming into the possibilities for naming this pup. The music theme continued with the suggestion of Aretha, after Aretha Franklin. But endless sessions yelling Mick's name in various dog parks made me realise that name choice was an important decision needing careful consideration. Frankly, I felt that hollering 'Aretha!' would just sound like I was inviting a urinary tract infection. My new puppy got her name after Jerry Hall. It made sense really because it was the '90s, Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall were still a couple and this pretty puppy was bound to be a supermodel—if only in my eyes.

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Human-sounding names are increasing popular. The trend for more Maggie's, Mollys, Oliver's & Bellas is thought to be have come from the anthropomorphism of our pets.

I've always had a preference for giving my pets real names, shying away from the more popular Rex, Max, Misty, Lucky and Tigger. I spent a great deal of time choosing my current puppy's name. The name Ralph was a firm favourite but then someone suggested this was more suited to a shaggier breed and not quite right for a Dalmatian. The name Ralph reminded me of the floppy-eared, shaggy brown dog from the Muppets—a favourite TV show from my childhood. This in turn gave me the idea for the name Scooter. Scooter was the nephew of the owner of the theatre where the Muppet Show was held. He was the underfoot 'gofer' for the production and maintained his position through a combination of efficiency and nepotism - slightly annoying but well meaning and exceptionally friendly. This seemed like the perfect fit.

Scooter quickly took the nickname of Scooter-the-Pooter and this was cause for an embarrassing moment during puppy pre-school classes. We had to show that puppy could recognise his/her own name. In the first few weeks of getting him home I hadn't really been calling Scooter by his name. I'd been using Pootie. The breeders had used the call of "puppy, puppy, puppy!" so I'd made the progression to "puppy, puppy, Pootie!" In the middle of class I was calling, "Scooter! Scooter!" with no response, so I switched to "Pootie!" This resulted in a bumbling, chubby puppy running to me, and more than a few sniggers from the other puppy parents.

An interesting point is that dogs don't necessarily need to have one name through their lives. Many strays rehomed through shelters and pounds don't have identification to let anyone know their name, yet in a short time they'll happily respond to a new moniker. My rescue dog, Lilly, is a prime example of this as she was called Tasha in her foster home. Prior to that we have no idea what her name was, but judging from her initial demeanour it was mostly used with harsh tones.

I chose the name Lilly as it was light and pretty and a favourite flower. It suits her perfectly. A pet name I use when in the park for her clicker training is Pookie, and she understands the difference. Renaming a rescue dog is often a step to positive change, a fresh start for a new life.

In the US, the non-gender-specific name of Max has consistently topped the list of popular dog names. But as reported in 'Psychology Today' magazine, human-sounding names are increasing popular. The trend for more Maggie's, Mollys, Oliver's and Bellas is thought to be have come from the anthropomorphism of our pets.

I was at a friend's house recently, on a blindingly hot January day where the mercury hit 42°C—the sort of heat that rattles your brains and leaves you able to do little more than consume liquids and flop on a couch. All pet people, we got to the subject of how we came to name our pets. Our host's dog was adopted into a house with cats, so it was natural that she would be Josie...and the Pussycats. Josie's human parents are clearly creative namers as one of Josie's cat-mates is called Habeas—as in habeas corpus (cor-puss).

Another girlfriend remembers that her Staffordshire Terrier was at the time the most expensive purchase she'd ever made, so she gave her dog a designer name—Jag. She felt that Gucci or Chanel would make her sound like a wanker. Her other dog is a Pug and when she went to collect her new pup she was convinced that the name would reveal itself as soon as she clapped eyes on her. The unfortunate name of Splat was all she could come up with. Thankfully, in time she was able to think of a much classier name—Dakota.

A dog-walking pal chose a Standard Poodle and so she worked on finding a French-sounding name like Bernadette, Amélie or perhaps Madeleine. But then came the realisation of the likelihood of having to shout this name in a dog park, so she decided on Mimi. However, she had no idea at the time that the Poodle's breed origins are traced back to being a German water dog. Had she known this, Mimi might be sporting a name like Brunhilda or Gretchen.

And around the room we continued, with another friend explaining that her Whippet pup came in a fawn colour—the colour of Milo the chocolate milk drink, and so that's how Milo got his name. Chopper the Amstaff X got his name because he has a chunk of ear missing, but beneath his broad and tough exterior lies a sweet-natured larrikin who's only interested in making human and doggy friends.

Sometimes you find dogs who add to their names through events, mishaps or just their quirky personalities. Take my friend Tanya's rescue dog Clancy. She'd not long had this 18-month-old when she left him alone with a leg of lamb thawing in the kitchen sink. After a couple of hours, the sweet aroma of lamb was tickling his olfactory senses and so Clancy decided to inspect the thawing meat. Despite his best efforts, Clancy wasn't able to sample the chunk of lamb but he did manage to turn the sink tap on. Several hours later Tanya arrived home to find the kitchen flooded and a wet dog. He's now referred to as Clancy of the Overflow.

I feel for the dogs named D-fer—as in 'D'-for-'dog'. It just seems like a worn-out joke inflicted on these poor souls. There's just plain mean names like the one given the dog I met on a recent trip to New Zealand—called Sir Crapsalot, or Crappy for short. Big names that people insist on calling in full in the dog park also amuse me. I've heard Mr Darcy, Heathcliff, Miss Dashwood, and Beatrix Potter. On the flip-side, there's an Airedale in my neighbourhood who has a great name—Baron von Awesome. Baron's got it easy at the dog park though, because he's just called Baron, without the full aristocratic moniker.

So before settling on a name for a new dog, think about the inevitable occasions when you're yelling your dog's name and frantically waving your arms as you see him/her about to plunge into the off-limits duck pond. Practice it a few times and remember to make it sound real, with high-pitched, annoyed or angry tones. This exercise alone should make or break the names being considered. If you're unsure, you should follow the three basic commandments in naming a pet.

- I. Thou shalt not allow a child to name a pet. Not unless you're going to be happy with names like Spot, Footy, Socks, Freckles or the dreaded D-fer or B-fer.
- II. Thou shalt not give a name the poor animal can never live up to (or live down). Names like Lassie, Rin Tin Tin, Gandhi, Buddha or anything that could be insulting like Adolph.
- III. Thou shalt not give a name thou cannot confidently yell in a crowded dog park. Commonsense should prevail here - Miss Poo-Tang was a corker I recently heard, and shouting for Big Boy to come is going to earn you some interesting reactions.

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