

DOG NEWS
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A 'PORTRAITIST'

THE ART OF MARTIAL ROBIN

One thing there is no shortage of at Crufts and that is concessions. One can buy anything from an expensive bronze to the latest gadget to clean your windows and virtually everything else one can think of in between, even book a holiday in Scotland. With upwards of 450 stands it is like a small town. It is one show in the UK calendar when virtually everyone who goes does so with the intention of spending money!



Some of the contemporary dog artists working in the UK and sales of published dog prints, use the show as an opportunity to display work and very popular much of it with the paying punters. Every year in a while though an artist comes along whose style, creativity and powers of observation, puts them above their contemporaries. Those who ventured to the extremities of that lot of Crufts were able to enjoy the work of one such artist, Martial Robin, who was exhibiting in the UK for the first time.

His work is already in collections in well over twenty countries and hangs in galleries in Australia, Finland and his native France but his first exhibition as a dog show was at the World Show last year. The passion and individuality he brings to his art will earn him many more admirers in the years to come and at last year he hopes soon to give up his dog grooming and become a professional artist.

In common with so many artists, Martial cannot remember a time when he was interested in dogs as

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not drawing but it was only some ten years ago that he took lessons, studying under Françoise Petard who took a few pupils. He says he is not a colourist, even though he has painted some very evocative still lifes, land and seascapes.

Martial experiments a lot with his art, he works on paper or wooden panels, his mediums are chalk, pencils, pastels and acrylics, and his palette a collection of the subtle colours of nature. He works quickly with up to five paintings on the go at once.

He describes himself as a 'portraitist' and for the last ten years has concentrated his art mainly on horses, which have always played a major part in his life and occupied much of his earlier art, and his beloved dogs. More recently there have been monkeys, which fascinate him and he equates many of their ways to the ways of humans. Not surprisingly sighthounds play a major role, for he has been a successful breeder of Afghanhounds for the last twenty-five plus years. During that time he has bred seventy champions with a total of more than 400 champion titles. His Belt of Honour Ch. Capucine du Meuseil Coloman also has the UK title and won the Hound Group at WELLS last year.

Martial describes his work as expressive. He likes painting animals that show a lot of character and which are in their own individual way different. He concentrates first on getting what is for him the defining feature of the animal he is painting, be it a look in the eye, the way it moves, or from more deeply searching within its soul. Then with a few strong brush strokes, well placed, loosely applied, or a few flicks of the pencil the subject is brought to life. "Too much detail destroys the essential" says Martial.

Many of the principles Martial adopts when breeding a litter apply equally to his art. Observe, reflect, use the eye, the brain and the heart. There is little difference between the concept of the new litter and its arrival, or the realisation of the finished picture, evaluating its potential and the pleasure it will give to others.

The art of Martial Robin can be seen at www.martialrobin.fr.



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