



*Boxer* by Lupe Hernandez

### SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Pet Portraits in Art" group exhibition  
Where: Hinnovations Art Gallery, 1009 Laurel  
When: Through Feb. 24. Hours: Mon-Thurs, 1pm to 6pm; Sat, 10am-5pm  
or by appointment.  
Contact: 956-688-6461

### **Best Friends**

Partial proceeds from the sale of these artworks will be donated to PAWS for the support of sheltered animals.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

On display at Hinnovations Art Gallery, "Pet Portraits in Art" is an exhibition with a warm and fuzzy feeling. This group show features paintings and drawings by seventeen artists who have created images of their non-human friends. Mostly suggesting human selfie tendencies with a focus on the face, a few works rise above this point of view, while several works surrender to a charming sweetness about their subject. Celerino Castillo's "Choloawa" is the best of the latter direction. Sporting a jaunty rose and whimsical sunglasses, this confident and treasured Chicana dog looks directly at the viewer, communicating a tough sweetness.

The most complex work in this exhibition is "Boxer" by Lupe Hernandez. Strongly influenced by Cubism, Hernandez combines Cubist conceits with his youthful experiments with graffiti, then adds realistic portraiture to the mix. The result is a

well navigated compositional foray merging an acknowledgment of the flat picture plane with well-drawn illusionism. “It’s an abstraction,” explained Hernandez. “It’s a combination of all my studies, joining my past all together in one.”

Chelsea Fedigan and Fany Mares also successfully combine the image of the animal with their artistic direction. “I Am Spike, Hear Me Roar” by Fedigan, brings together Spike and Fedigan’s control of color. The assertive dog’s face is shown at close range, but we don’t feel threatened. Although Spike has taken command of his bright yellow color field, his face fills only half of the canvas. His spikey hair is carefully outlined in orange, surrounding a blue and purple hued black coat, and popping with a bright pink tongue. The dark image against the yellow background screams urgency, but perhaps not of a deadly sort. By contrast, Mare’s embeds the image of “Browny” into her signature boldly textured surface, communicating a strong sense of tactile relationship. “Browny” appears passive, depicted lying down with one eye partially open, with Post Impressionistic paint strokes reinforcing the feeling of ongoing vigilance.

Even though these images reflect the present, there are some affectionate references to the past, not only evident through usage of appropriate past artistic styles, but sometimes outspokenly as part of the artwork itself. Marco Sanchez romanticizes the pre-World War 1 era that was popularized in the Downton Abbey series. His watercolor, “Wind and Wuthering: Tales of an English Hunter”, dives headfirst into nostalgia with a birding dog with its aristocratic owner. “These pointer dogs for me are just very interesting because of the way they’re conditioned to see and to point,” said Sanchez. “I love the pose; I just fell in love with the pose.” Sanchez also connects with the final gasp of a tradition that peaked during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, where, in great detail, portraits of pets were commonly included in family portraits. These images tended to include the pet’s environment or relationship to their owner. Unfortunately, many works in this show lack the effort to tell us anything about the isolated pet other than the fact that its head exists.

“This exhibition highlights the devotion humans have for their furry companions,” stated Raquel Hinojosa, Gallery Owner, “as well as bringing more attention to pet rescue shelters.” “Pet Portraits” is partnering with the Laurie P. Andrews PAWS Center with proceeds from the sale of artworks going in part to aid with the care of the sheltered animals.

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