

Westmount Art Scene

Ron Jamieson Jr.: A breed apart

BY HEATHER BLACK



For over 6,000 years, artists have depicted the majestic greyhound. Rising to the challenge of portraying this magnificent breed, local artist Ron Jamieson has recently completed 13 canvases. Currently on display at Han Art Gallery, this "greyhound series" will delight art enthusiasts and dog lovers alike.

While dogs as art subject is not uncommon - Hockney's pet dachshunds or Titian's royal hounds spring to mind - each artist's approach is unique. Portraying two greyhounds Roma and Horace larger than life, his realistic execution captures both the beauty of the breed and their soulful presence.

Although greyhounds are commonly depicted as companions to the pharaohs



(Egyptian tomb, c. 4000 BC), or as working dogs (Uccello's "The Hunt in the Forest", c. 1470), Jamieson's impetus lies in the physical attributes of the breed - the thin yet powerful legs, the fragile but deep chest. Setting his subject against a dark

background, the artist's focus is on form.

An experienced designer, Jamieson close crops the image to draw attention to the form - the head and legs of a resting greyhound in one, in another, a hind quarter. This is not the Covillesque composition of his previous paintings of dogs or dogwalkers, but a powerful technique that stops the viewer short, to observe the elegant greyhound anew.

Composition is central to the artist. By positioning each subject off-centre, Jamieson creates an aesthetic symmetry of light and dark, the lighting itself convey-

ing a powerful dignity. But it is also this duality of asymmetric symmetry that expresses the tension between action and movement that reflects the greyhound's restless attentiveness.

Delicacy of technique

The artist's deft use of quick, fine brushstrokes also conveys the breed's restlessness as well as contributes to the painting's elegance. By applying thin acrylic washes followed by increasingly opaque strokes, he creates the thin-skinned, fine-haired realism.

This technique also accentuates the luminous vigilance of soulful eyes. That watchfulness, the artist explains, is not unlike his own. We "invade their environment" and trigger a quick attentiveness. But Jamieson, by painting oversized portraits, turns the table so that Roma or Horace pervades the viewer's consciousness.

The result is an increased awareness and respect for these quiet, delicate creatures. And, by effectively capturing their graceful presence and gentle spirit, the "what is not there", Jamieson has earned our respect.

The exhibit continues until April 6 at Han Art Gallery, 4209 St. Catherine St. (www.hanartgallery.com) 514.876.9278.

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