

ON ALL FRONTS

News, reviews, books & products * EDITED BY REBECCA WALLWORK

Life Imitates Art

Conservator Lawrence Castagna has restored many great works of dog art, but a recent project was a life-changing experience. While working on three oil paintings of Basset Hounds by Maud Earl, Castagna fell in love with one face on the 110-year-old canvas—a Basset Hound named Solomon.

"He was looking at me every day," Castagna told the *Gazette* for a feature on art restoration that ran in the October 2009 issue. "His gaze got to me."

So much so that Castagna decided he had to have a Basset Hound of his own. Luckily, Jim Dok, the painting's owner, is a leading Basset Hound breeder. And it just so happened he had a tricolor pup, named Gamble, who seemed a perfect fit for Castagna's life in East Hampton, near the tip of Long Island, New York.

So on January 13, Gamble embarked on the long trip from Dok's Castlehill's kennel, on Washington State's Puget Sound, to Kennedy Airport, where his new owner was anxiously waiting.

"The Gamble has landed!" Castagna wrote in e-mails to friends the next day. "We are bonding quickly... He listens to me and is very well behaved. He is snoozing at my feet as I type this."

Within the week, Gamble's sensitive nose had checked out every inch of his new home and the dog had settled in. For Castagna, it was like seeing a century-old work of art come to life: "The movements, the sniffling, the brow wrinkles, and sometimes the same poses. Maud Earl was able to capture all of that and now I can see it up close. I bet Maud Earl would be very happy indeed!" —Mara Boyrun



top: Castagna meets Gamble at the airport.
left: Solomon is in the center panel, at the back.



Paws Up >>

To two lifesaving teams who braved raging waters to save dogs in distress.

On January 22, 60 Los Angeles firefighters rushed to the rescue of a German Shepherd Dog-mix stranded on a ledge in the middle of the flood-swollen Los Angeles River. Rescuers quickly realized the only hope was to dangle a person from a helicopter and snatch the dog from the rapids. That task came to 25-year Los Angeles Fire Department veteran Joe St. Georges.

The dog was not cooperative, but St. Georges held tight as the pair was hoisted by cable into a helicopter. TV coverage pushed the lost dog into the spotlight, and a few days later his owner, Maria Medina, showed up to claim him. The dog, Spikey, and Medina's Labrador Retriever, Polo, had wandered away from her property when her grandchildren left the gate open. Happily, Spikey and Polo are now safely home.

Four days later and halfway around the world, another water rescue turned a stray and his savior into celebrities. This story began with a dog stranded on an ice floe floating on a river past the Polish city of Grudziadz. Rescue efforts by firefighters failed, and the dog was about 15 miles out into open water when, in a fantastic stroke of luck, he drifted past a Polish research ship, the *Baltica*. The crew lowered a pontoon, and ship mechanic Adam Buczynski grabbed the wet, shivering castaway, who was soon onboard, sharing sausages with the crew.

Within days, several people tried to claim him, but, according to reports, the dog "rejected" them all. He was in need of a bath but fearful of water—until Buczynski picked up the dog and the two took a shower together, cementing the bond between rescuer and rescued. Soon Buczynski announced that he had a new pet, and the ship a new mascot. On February 10, *Baltica* came onboard as the *Baltica*'s newest crew member. —M.B.

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A Gamble pays off

When we last left Gamble the Basset Hound and art conservator Larry Castagna, they were saying their first tentative hellos at Kennedy Airport on a cold night in January (April 2010 GAZETTE). The stubby-legged pup had a tough job before him. Months earlier, Castagna had fallen in love with a Basset Hound, Solomon, in a Maud Earl painting he restored for breeder Jim Dok, of Castlehall's kennel in Washington state. But Solomon was an idealized image of a great show dog who lived more than 100 years ago.

It was up to Gamble to prove that a flesh-and-blood Basset could be just as wonderful.

So far, so good. Gamble has broadened the artist's horizons, sending him on all kinds of adventures. In May, the pair traveled to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to participate in the Basset Hound Club of America's hunt test and field trial (see story, page 32). It was a long trip, from the tip of Long Island all the way out to southern Pennsylvania, but the ride went quickly. "Gamble is a great traveling companion,"

Castagna says. Then, on the first day of August, they were off to an AKC Canine Experience, which was organized by the Suffolk County Kennel Club, in King's Park, New York. Gamble was one of 20 dogs to pass the Canine Good Citizen test that day.

But it's not all fun and games. Gamble is taking an active role in his owner's work, as muse, model, and critic. Castagna, an artist as well as a conservator, is working on a portrait of his dog. And nothing leaves the studio without a once-over by the hound. Here, Gamble gives a final inspection to Castagna's restoration of Percival Leonard Rosseau's 1906 oil painting *Lola*, part of the AKC's collection. Although Gamble's art appreciation was greatly improved by a treat held above the painting, Castagna is pretty certain that his dog was impressed by the beauty of the work, and appeared to be yearning to chase the pheasant. —Mara Bovsun



Gamble gives this painting a once-over.

Play-space renewal



Our canine pals may love them, but be honest, don't off-leash areas generally leave much to be desired in the way of ambiance? That's why the Nutro Company devoted the month of June to sprucing up some of these less-than-garden spots with its "Room to Run" events. Armed with sod, brushes, hay bales, and agility equipment, volunteers from the company and the communities attacked the problem of dog-park blight throughout the United States and Canada. At Nashville's Centennial Park, Nutro volunteers erected an agility course, and at George Ward Park in Birmingham, Alabama, other volunteers constructed a retaining wall made of hay bales. The program was sparked by a recent survey, sponsored by the company, in which 40 percent of respondents said that the grass in their dog parks was poorly maintained and 36 percent complained that the places were dirty.

—M.B.