

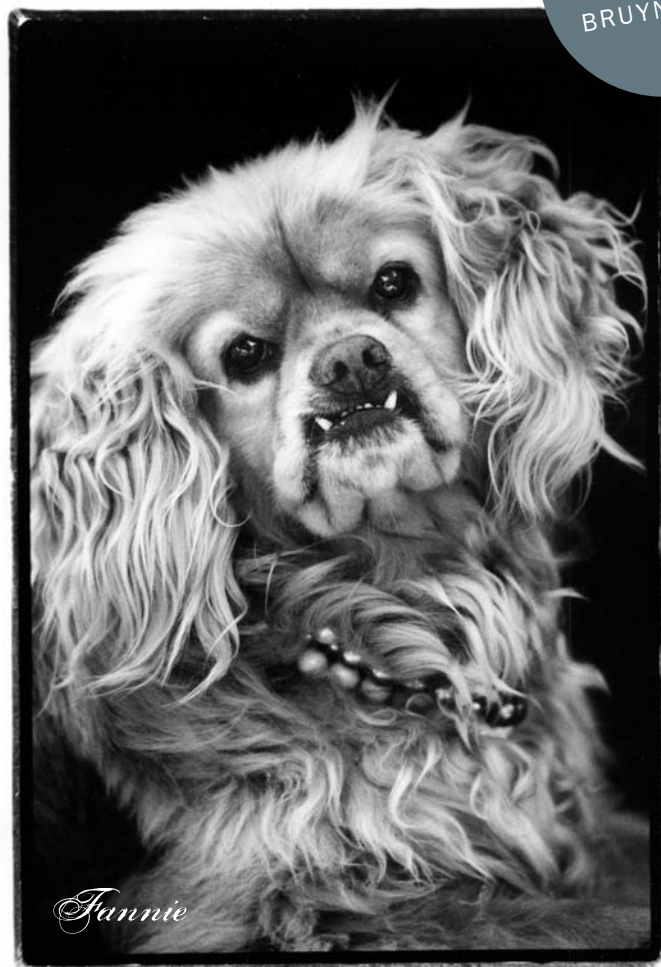


Sinbad

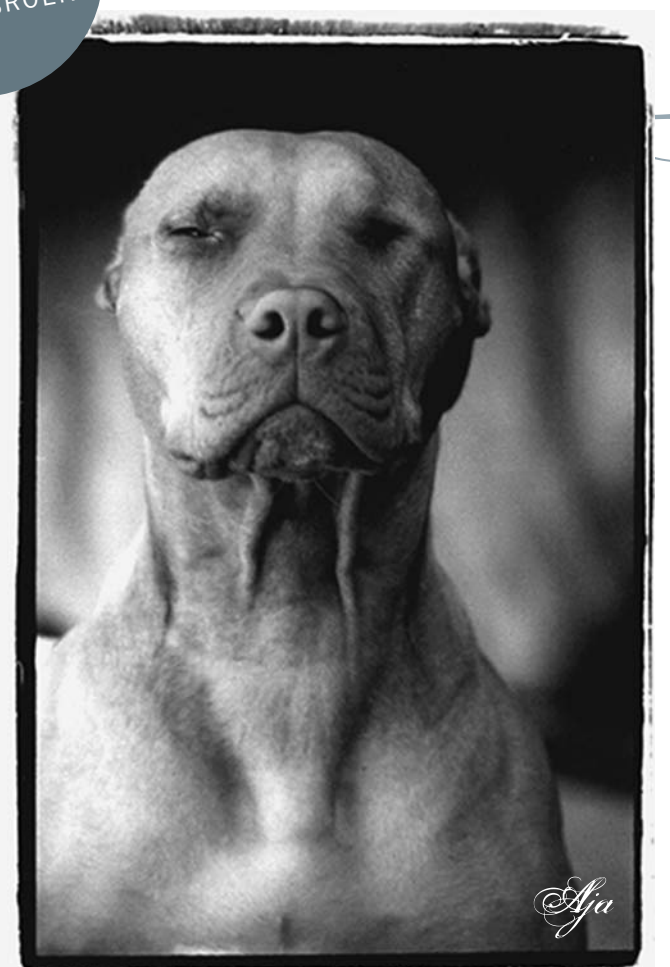


Betty Lou

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY FRANK
BRUYNBROEK



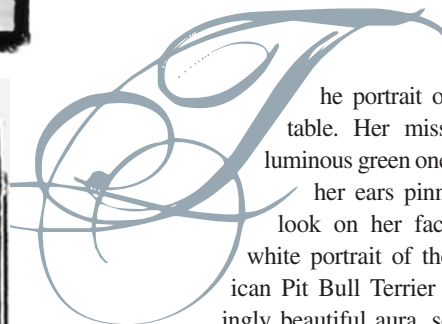
Fannie



Aja

Beauty in the abandoned

Photographer captures the soulful side of shelter dogs.



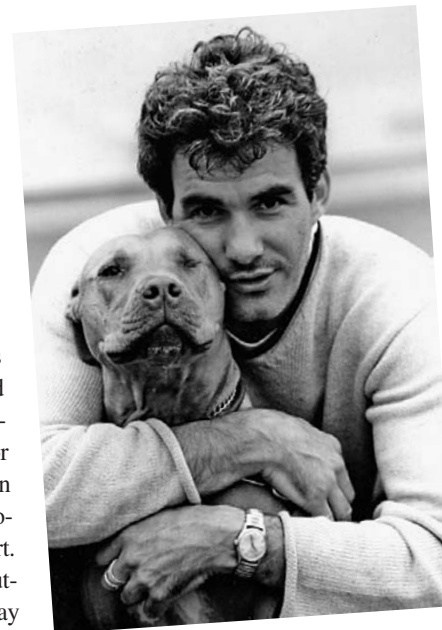
The portrait of Aja is unforgettable. Her missing eye and her luminous green one are almost closed, her ears pinned back, a serene look on her face. The black-and-white portrait of the red-nosed American Pit Bull Terrier possesses a hauntingly beautiful aura, sort of like a canine Mona Lisa.

Yet this is not a one-time-get-lucky Kodak moment. Photographs as rich as this are commonplace for Los Angeles-based dog photographer Frank Bruynbroek (pronounced BRIN-brook). He's best known for capturing canine souls and personalities in dramatic black-and-white portraits too emotionally charged not to be called works of art.

Originally from a small town on the outskirts of Brussels, Belgium, this modern-day Renaissance man tried his hand at everything — French teacher, light-show designer, ski instructor, commercial director, and background singer.

At the age of 29, he moved to Hollywood to give acting a try. It turned out he was good at it. From securing small parts in *Godzilla* and *Rush Hour 3* to landing commercials, television spots, and voice-over work, Bruynbroek found himself immersed in the Hollywood dream. Between acting jobs, he dabbled in his hobby, photography.

It was during one of these dabbles that Bruynbroek stumbled upon his true calling.



In 1997 while taking head shots of a fellow actor, Bruynbroek turned around and saw his 1-year-old American Pit Bull Terrier-Boxer mix Rosalie staring at him in the most intriguing way. Acting on instinct, he snapped the shot, and suddenly knew he was on to something.

"I thought I'd just give it a shot, knowing it probably wasn't going to work anyway," Bruynbroek says.

It was after Rosalie died unexpectedly that Bruynbroek realized how precious that one perfect photo capturing her spirit was to him.

Years passed, more acting ensued. Then came the photo of Aja, another of Bruynbroek's beloved rescues. The sun slanted through the yard just right, Aja beamed into the lens, and Bruynbroek struck gold, the image further launching his photography career.

The pieces began taking shape. Aja's portrait won contests and was sold numerous times to various publications, mainly because it says so much, Bruynbroek says.

Today, dog owners hire Bruynbroek to take portraits of their pets, many of whom are rescues. Sometimes he will approach owners of interesting-looking dogs at popular dog hangouts, like the hiking trails near his home.

He spends hours with his canine subjects in their own environments, waiting patiently for that one moment — that one look — so what he captures on film (he's old school, no digital cameras here) not only makes a good picture, but symbolizes what that dog is all about. No silly hats, wigs, or funny poses in a

BY
KYRA
KIRKWOOD



Pistol and Pumpkin



Mi Vida Loca

studio setting — Bruynbroek's style is all about finding the dog's essence and letting it come through the lens.

"Dogs live in the moment. That's when I connect with them in my camera," he says. "They're very much like Zen masters. Animals are freer than we are. They don't judge."

Now he's giving back to dogs. Having adopted Rosalie, Aja, and his other pit bull Sophie from the Brittany Foundation, a nonprofit all-breed dog rescue in Los Angeles, Bruynbroek is no stranger to the joys of rescuing dogs and the need to bring attention to dog rescues.

"Why don't I use my talent with photography to help the cause?" he remembers thinking about four years ago. "I began looking at my art differently. The cause of rescue dogs became bigger, almost a humanitarian cause. It's almost like my calling. It's definitely a great new chapter of my life I embrace."

An idea began brewing: Create a book featuring rescued dogs photographed in the soulful, black-and-white, close-up, portrait style Bruynbroek is famous for. Tentatively called *Compawssion*, the book will be an homage to his Rosalie, the countless dogs needing homes, and the former orphans now living good lives with loving owners.

"I want to show that dogs, no matter how cruel we were to them, they bounce back, and they love back," he says.

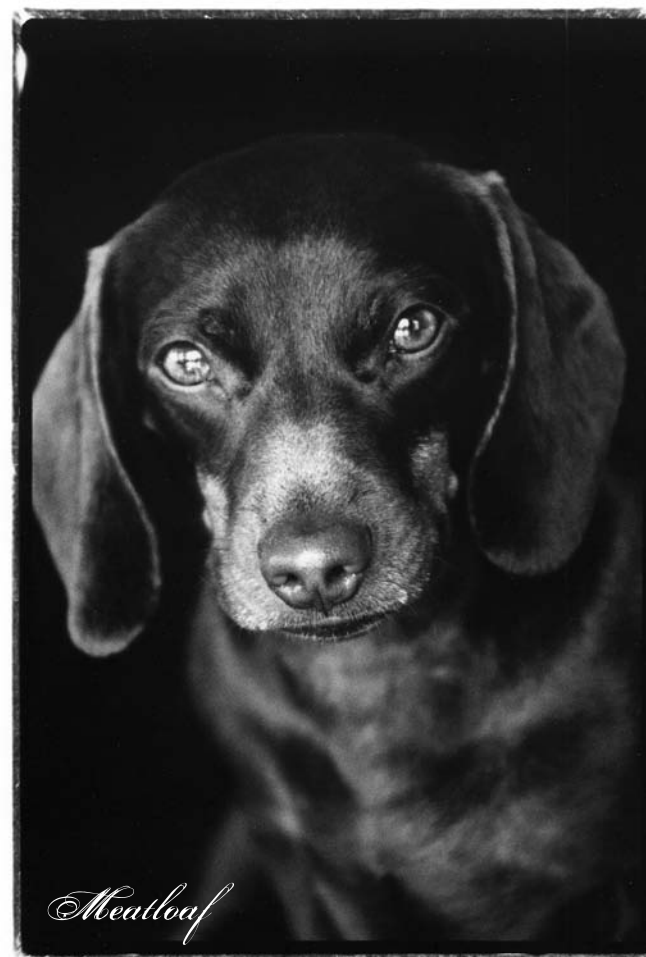
Stories written by celebrities about dogs' love will round out the coffee-table book, with proceeds going to dog rescue organizations. Bruynbroek hopes to have this work in progress published in the near future.

Since 2006 Bruynbroek has also produced two lines of calendars filled with the same type of rich-looking canine portraiture. Part of the proceeds from "For Dog's Sake" and "Oh My Dog!" goes to the Brittany Foundation.

Introducing people to the idea of rescue is one goal of Bruynbroek's



Little Dude



Meatloaf

gallery, Oh My Dog, in Idyllwild, Calif., near Palm Springs. Featuring approximately 70 large-scale black and whites of dogs, the gallery invites visitors not just to view Bruynbroek's photographic talents, but to experience peace and tranquility, and be inspired.

"It's the seed I plant in people's brains with art and soulful pictures," he says. "It goes beyond a canine picture. If I can be inspirational, it's my duty to inspire people."

His three pit-bull girls are gone now. "Every time a dog goes, it's devastating," he says. "It's a way to show us that nothing lasts forever and death is a part of life. [Maybe] they show us the way."

But Bruynbroek hasn't given up on fostering orphans. Perhaps history will repeat itself, and he'll adopt one of his fosters as he did three times before.

One thing's for sure: He'll be photographing those who stay with him even temporarily. Because canine photography is more than a job for Bruynbroek. It's his mission. ■

Kyra Kirkwood is a DOG FANCY contributing editor who lives in Fullerton, Calif.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

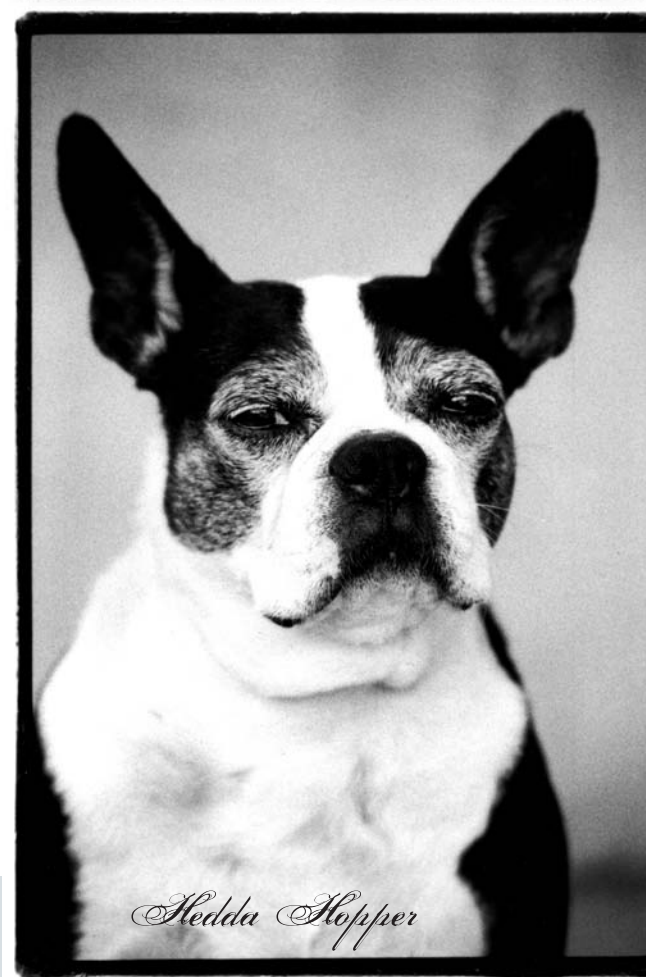


Find out more about Frank Bruynbroek's photography and rescue work by visiting these websites:

Oh My Dog Photos: www.ohmydogphotos.com

Brittany Foundation: www.brittanyfoundation.com

See more of Frank's images in an automated slide show at DogChannel.com/extras



Hedda Kopper