

Denis' Dancing Dogs.

Sculptor Denis Curtiss works in steel and bronze and wood, and his life-sized sculptures depict many of earth's living creatures in joyful poses and happy moods. Twenty years of travels and work all around the world left him with firsthand experience and impressions of animals in their free habitats, where their movements are unfettered and natural. He camped in Africa amid giraffes, elephants, and rhinos. He worked in the Mideast where camels could be seen from his windows. He lived on a South Pacific island where birds patrolled the beaches. He explored the American continent and watched bear, bison, and moose amble through their land. Back at his studio in Connecticut, Denis transformed his memories into a durable art in frolic through the seasons.

Artists, of course, are advised to do what they know, to express their personal experiences. So when it came to sculpting a dog, he did not have much choice. He shares his home with three Airedales and a Welsn Terrier. Their antics and poses at any given moment, are inspiration enough!

Denis's unique work in metals has been described as "triangulated cubism." From sheets of steel or bronze, he creates a planar form of three dimensions, as he interprets the parts of each animal. In! the case of Airedales, the dense leg furnishings, the jaunty tail, the distinctive beard, all make his sculpture unmistakable. Never static, his dogs are dancing and cavorting, and just generally exuding joy.

For this reason, even people who are not Airedale owners are captivated by the sculpture, and choose one to buy for their art collections. Denis works full time in his studio but cannot keep ahead of the demand for these Terriers. He has sold them to delighted buyers all around the country. Fortunately is is much easier to ship a life-sized Airedle sculptre than it is to ship a fourteen-foot tall giraffe, though that, too, has been done.

"Gypsy" was entered in the juried Art Show ath the Dog Show, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, art exhibits of work depicting dogs, where it won the award for Best Sculpture and the show's Award of Merit. "Gypsy" went on to spend months on exhibit at the AKC's Museum of the Dog in St. Louis,! plus one of Denis' scul.ptures of a Basset. While Airedales are his most popular breed, he has won the hearts of Basset owners, as well as Afghan Hounds.

The patina of weathered raw steel perfectly suits the Airedale's color. Bronze is finished in various shades. Shown earlier, the dancing Airedale sculpture titled "Annette" in in the polished bronze state, but will later have a green-blue verdigris finish familiar on weather vanes. All of these pieces can endure harsh weather, and part of their charm is watching the colors react with the environment, changing when it rains, or wearing a cloak of snow after a winter storm.

How do real Airedales react to them? Some dogs stop in their tracks at the first view, others pay no attention at all. One dog ran straight over to "Boart" to sniff his bottom and seemed surprised not to have that greeting reciprocated!"

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