

What a great picture. That dog looks awesome.
THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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**A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PET PROJECT -- Is it the animal magnetism?
Clients can't wait to get their paws on these prints**

By **Cindy Wolff** / wolff@commercialappeal.com

Photographer **Jack Kenner** can round up exotic green and red frogs and get them to dangle from a tree limb like a bug-eyed chorus line.

He can capture the grace of a giraffe plodding along in front of a setting African sun.

But last month, he couldn't get Romeo, a 117-pound German shepherd, or Alexandra, an 18-month-old toddler, to sit still.

It looks like cat-herding when he and Carla Touliatos, Alexandra's mom, and Terry Panitz, Kenner's friend, try to get the uncooperative child and dog to light for a picture.

Kenner, 52, spent the last few years adding pet portraits to his 35-year-old portfolio that includes hundreds of Memphis in May shots and photos of exotic frogs from the Memphis Zoo. The pet photography started with a picture of his West Highland terriers in the kitchen with his wife while she was loading the dishwasher.

With one dog standing on the open dishwasher door and another at her feet, a new niche in Kenner's professional life was born. He took the photo along with his fine art pieces to street fairs.

"It's like I didn't have any other photos there but the one of Winston and Murphy," said **Kenner**. "People started asking me to shoot pictures of their dogs and it just took off from there."

The portraits are more high-end than some pet photographs where

Santa sits in a chair holding dogs and sometimes cats that clearly don't want to be anywhere near the red-suited, fake-bearded one . The sitting fee is \$150, and photos range from \$125 for an 8-by-10 to \$900 for a 30-by-40.

Kenner doesn't use pull-down backdrops of autumn scenes or hay bales and bandanas to make the photos kitschy. Instead he tries to capture an old-world feel of a formal portrait with dark background and strategic lighting to bring out colors and shadows.

His pet portraits were recently exhibited in the lobby at Playhouse on the Square, and some can be seen at the doggie day care business Dog's Rule.

The subjects seem alarmingly calm given the usual canine frenzy that often looks like a blur in home photos.

"I laughed and told him 'no way' when he said he could photograph my dogs," said Anne Halloran, who decided to get portraits of her Yorkshire terrier Duke and Maggie the Maltese for her husband, Pat, president of the Orpheum.

"He had toys that made noise and they were fascinated by him," said Halloran.

The couple both have the portraits framed on their desks at work. Anne said she has scenic pictures of her child's wedding there, too, but people always gravitate to the dog pictures .

Touliatos, whose husband, Greg, owns a landscape design and construction business, has collected Kenner's fine art photographs since 1996. She wanted him to shoot a portrait of her youngest child and Romeo.

Kenner said the first thing he likes to do is let the dog get a feel for his studio, which is located behind Studio on the Square in Midtown.

That could take awhile depending on the curiosity of the dog. **Kenner** just waits them out.

Add a willful toddler to the mix and the photo shoot progresses in spurts and stops.

The dog sits.

"Stay."

Alexandra sits on her rocking horse.

Click.

Romeo bolts. Touliatos wrangles the dog and gets him back in place.

"Stay."

Alexandra climbs off the horse. Romeo trots away.

The dance continues for about a half-hour.

Kenner gets out some crayons and paper for Alexandra. She sits still for a few minutes and colors. Romeo wearies and settles near the child for a few minutes.

Kenner shoots.

Done.

Sometimes he's got what he needs in 10 minutes. Sometimes he's there an hour.

"It's the same thing I did when I shot the exotics," said **Kenner**. "I want to capture the spirit of the animal. I wait for them to tell me what they want. If I just wait, the moment always comes."

He's hoping to expand his business to shoot cats, although cat owners are as unsure of his ability to herd cats as dog owners were.

"I want to come to people's houses to shoot the cats. They are much better in their own surroundings. I want to build these incredible sets for cats to make it look like they are in a painting."

Kenner's studio is at 2094 Court. Information: 722-8877 or
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