

Dog Photographer, a New Niche Profession: “The Essential Thing Is to Avoid Tongues Hanging Out in the Shots”

By Guillemette Faure

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Dog photos may be proliferating in the digital galleries of their “parents,” but that hasn’t stopped a new generation of professional photographers from making a living off highly polished portraits.

Carmen Gonzalez got up early. At 8 a.m., she has an appointment with Napoléon, a Parisian whippet. Dog photography happens early in the morning. For four years now, this American has been a canine photographer. She normally lives in New York: in early June, she photographed some 200 canines there before flying on to Italy, then Paris. “The difficulty with European dogs is that they hold their poses a bit less well during photo sessions. New York dogs are so used to posing that it makes the job easier... When they arrive, it’s as if they already know what’s expected of them.”

While Mylène Bertaux, author of *Toutoute* (Fayard, 2024)—an investigative book on the place of dogs in our lives from Los Angeles to Paris—acknowledges that our four-legged companions are more stressed in the French capital, she sees this above all as a generational issue. “Millennial dogs are more accustomed to being handled by attentive ‘dog parents.’” Her French bulldog, she says, naturally looks straight into the lens. She keeps about 2,470 photos of *Toutoute* on her smartphone—nearly five and a half times more than of her partner, who entered her life earlier.

And this is one of the mysteries of canine photography. Owners have smartphones capable of capturing their animals from every angle. “They have just as many megapixels as we do,” says professional photographer Lola Ledoux. Yet in recent years, the profession of dog photographer has taken off.

In January, New York State passed a law allowing dogs to serve as wedding witnesses. Carmen Gonzalez is delighted. Her portfolio includes photos from the wedding of the “parents” of Harvey, a Manhattan mutt wearing a bow tie and tuxedo jacket. This was before the new law, and permits had to be negotiated to allow the photo shoot at the desired municipal location.

Harvey isn’t the most stylish dog in her portfolio. There’s also Keekee, wearing triangular sunglasses and full formal attire—a replica of a dress by Nina Ricci designer Harris Reed, worn by a star of the series *Emily in Paris* at a masked ball in the fourth season. “Just look at how she knows how to pose at four months old!” the photographer marvels.

Inspired by the Met Gala, an association now organizes a Pet Gala two weeks earlier, where dogs attend dressed in outfits mimicking those worn by fashion and Hollywood stars at the previous year’s Met Gala.

In Paris, Carmen Gonzalez visited Bone Appart, a dog café near Place des Vosges run by Rebecca Anhalt, an American who sells croissant-shaped kibble and berets to clients seeking

canine “Frenchness.” Rebecca connected her with the prized network of expat dogs eager to have their portraits taken.

French photographers don’t cite a specific date for when demand began, but rather moments when certain trends emerged: dog cafés, dog yoga, birthday cakes for dogs.

Rates for private photo sessions range from 100 to 300 euros, depending on the package. Many clients want photos because they sense their dog is aging and want to preserve a memory.

To stand out from standard action shots, some photographers create vintage-themed portraits with stylists and makeup artists, emphasizing the shared experience as much as the final image.

Dog photography requires managing the unexpected. Photographers rely on tricks: ignoring the animal, letting it sniff the camera, making noises to attract attention. Treats and water are essential to avoid tongues hanging out in the shots.

Competition from amateurs is intense, but professionals emphasize expertise, equipment, and skill. Cats are photographed too—but dogs remain the dominant subject.

— Guillemette Faure