

# DACHSHUND



Stephanie Monteith with her dog McKlovsy.

*Dynamism of a dog on a leash* (1912) by the Italian Futurist Giacomo Balla shows a tiny Dachshund scampering alongside its owner, its efforts to keep up suggested by a whirr of superimposed legs. While this must be the most famous image of a Dachshund in art, painters as diverse as Rembrandt, Rubens, Rivera, Picasso and Warhol all had 'sausage dogs' as pets. This breed competes with the Pug as the favourite of artists. The attachment of Picasso to his Dachshund, Lump, has been documented in at least two books. Brisbane-born artist Stephanie Monteith says that 'these images of dogs in art captivate me because they convey something about the temperament of this type of dog'.

Spritely, intelligent, intensely loyal to its owners and a little highly strung are the characteristics generally listed. There is a sense that for such a Lilliputian dog to survive in our gigantic world it needs a double dose of energy and acumen. Balla has captured this through movement; Monteith does it with light. Her dog is enveloped in a pulsating field of energy. Watercolour painting, which has been an important medium for the artist since 1996, enhances the work's luminosity.

The dog - his name is McKlovsy - is Monteith's own. Although this is her first dog painting, domesticated animals have been a recurrent theme in her work. Jean Paul Sartre once said that 'man's fate on this planet is an affair of men to be settled among men themselves ... on that level there are only men'. Monteith's studies of domesticated animals have been informed by a different existential insight. They are intended to question the system by which humans order and judge the world around them: deciding what is natural and unnatural, what has more worth, is more advanced or evolved. Rather than a world where we stand alone, unlinked in any meaningful way with nature and those beings 'outside' the human orbit, Monteith's animals reorient us. McKlovsy looking out at the viewer from the floor of the artist's studio, horses and cattle: these are the creatures pulsating with form and life within the mechanised and compartmentalised environment their human captors have created.

Stephanie Monteith (1973-)  
*Young Sausage Dog* 2005.  
Watercolour on paper, 18.0 x 27.0 cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist  
and James Doherty Project Space, Sydney

