

W is for William Wegman

ABOUT THE ART

William Wegman is best known for photographing his dogs. He started in the early 1970s when he got his first dog, Man Ray. Since then, he has photographed all eight of his dogs. Sometimes he photographs them just sitting or interacting with furniture in silly ways, like in the two prints that are in Plains Art Museum's permanent collection (shown here). What most people know William for, however, are photographs and videos of his dogs wearing clothes and doing things that humans do. He has published many books and videos of his dogs (some are in the Plains Art Museum library). Some of his videos were made for Sesame Street.

Wegman's dogs are all a breed called a Weimaraner. Weimaraners have a silky gray coat and were bred to be hunting dogs. That makes them very obedient and able to sit for long periods of time. They like to get lots of exercise so William takes them on long walks in the woods when they are in Maine and walks them back and forth to the studio in New York City. He says his dogs like to work in the studio and they like to please him. You can see him with his dogs in some of the videos we have listed.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

William Wegman was born December 2, 1943 in Holyoke, Massachusetts. He wanted to be a painter, so he went to college to get a degree in painting. He graduated with his bachelor's degree from the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston in 1965. He then went on to get a master's degree from the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana in 1967. He taught at the University of Wisconsin for a few years and then for one year at California State College in Long Beach. By then his paintings were being shown in museums all around the world.

While he was in Long Beach, he got his first dog and named him Man Ray after a famous French artist. Man Ray liked to go to the painting studio and William started photographing him there. Man Ray died in 1982 and William waited 4 years to get another dog. His second dog was named Fay Ray. He has had dogs ever since and all are the children and grandchildren of Fay Ray.

William lived in New York City and in Maine and continues to paint and draw and take photos of his dogs.



Ride, 1993, Color Lithograph, Anonymous Gift to Plains Art Museum



Override, 1993, Color Lithograph, Anonymous Gift to Plains Art Museum

FUNNY PETS A PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE RULES THAT CAN HELP YOU TAKE GOOD PHOTOGRAPHS?

Professional photographers follow many rules. Here are a few rules to think about as a beginner.

1. FILL THE FRAME

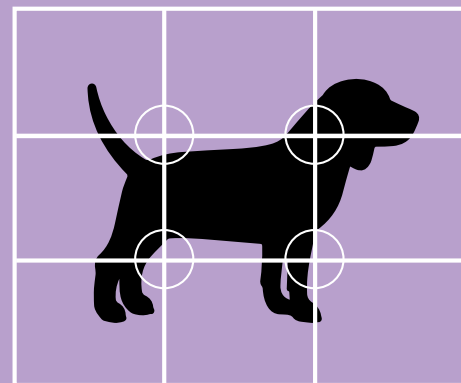
Just like when you are drawing or painting, you want the subject of your photograph to fill the frame, not be just a tiny dot in the distance.

2. RULE OF THIRDS

This is probably the most used rule in photography. Divide your photo into thirds both vertically and horizontally. Place the most important part of your subject either on one of the lines or where the lines meet (see the illustration).

3. WATCH THE BACKGROUND

Make sure your background doesn't compete with your subject.



DO THE TWO PRINTS OF WILLIAM WEGMAN'S FOLLOW THESE RULES? IN WHAT WAY?

DOES YOUR PET SIT IN FUNNY POSITIONS OR DO FUNNY THINGS? Do you sometimes dress your pet in costumes or hats? Would your dog sit on a chair about to tip over? Take a picture of your pet doing something funny using the 3 rules of photography.

DON'T HAVE A PET AT YOUR HOUSE? No problem! Draw or paint a picture of an animal doing something funny. Compose your drawing or painting using the rules of photography (they also apply to drawing and painting).

WE WANT TO SEE WHAT YOU PHOTOGRAPH OR DRAW/PAINT! Send your photo or artwork to education@plainsart.org. Tell us your first name and last initial. We will publish some of your photos on our social media sites. #plainsartmuseum

LEARN MORE

WILLIAM WEGMAN AND HIS WEIMARANER MUSES
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un1tdtFRKY0>
Video about how Wegman makes his photographs.
(A word of caution: there is a nude sculpture near the end)

WILLIAM WEGMAN'S WILDERNESS:
AN ARTIST AND HIS DOGS AT HOME
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7cnZjRYVtg>
Made by the New York Times. Profiles Wegman and his dogs at his home in Maine.

William Wegman's videos featuring his dogs:

WILLIAM WEGMAN - ALPHABET SOUP
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhl_Z2Apcyk
Made for Sesame Street.

DOGS MAKE BREAD
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgQNx_aRZgk
Made for Sesame Street.

WILLIAM WEGMAN'S MOTHER GOOSE
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgZ7KXA-l6w>
Made for Sesame Street.



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