

JENNY JURNELIUS

AN INTERVIEW

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PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF. HOW DID YOU COME ABOUT BEING A DOG PHOTOGRAPHER AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DOING IT?

I live outside Stockholm, Sweden, with my three dogs Vintra, Okra and Liva. I breed dogs on a small scale since 2017. I got my first own dog as a teenager. It was a Doberman who was a really fun dog. At that time, I met my first Ridgeback. There was something about that dog that I carried with me for many years. After that I was away from dogs for a few years while I studied at several art schools.

When time came to get another dog, I wasn't sure what breed. My sisters had German Shepherds and Rottweilers, which all were very lovely dogs. But for some reason I couldn't get rid of the thought of a Ridgeback. So, after a lot of research and deciding what I wanted out of my dog life, I got my first Ridgeback in 2007. Her name was Vimla and I learned so much from her.

She had an injury and broke her leg as a puppy which started our journey of rehabilitation.

Long story short, this led me to more studies to become a dog physiotherapist and today I run a fitness and rehab center for dogs, main focus being on using aqua-therapy in a pool.

Jokingly, I call this my "bonus job" in the evening because I love to help to train and rehabilitate dogs.

HOW DID YOU FIRST ENTER THE PHOTOGRAPHY WORLD? DID YOU HAVE FORMAL TRAINING? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My dad had his own darkroom at home in the basement where he developed photos from film and I thought it was incredibly exciting to see how the pictures appeared on paper. I got my first camera when I was 9 years old. It was a pocket camera with regular film. When I was in my early teens I got my father's old system camera, a Pen-

tax with several lenses. When I grew up, I spent a lot of time in church since they had many youth activities and one of them was a photo group with camera laboratory and everything.

I have studied at several art schools with a focus on fine art painting, sculpture and design. I was accepted to the Danish School of Design in Copenhagen where I studied product design for 5 years as well as visual arts, composition and also photography. Since then, I've worked professionally with image and form. So now I have the fancy title – "Master of fine art in Industrial design".

I graduated in 2005 and have since worked professionally with design and photography as a freelancer.

As a photographer, I work mainly with dogs and motorcycles. Strange combo you might think, but they have a lot in common. A portrait of a motorcycle or a dog, it's about finding the right angles, the right composition, the right light. Both of their bodies contain a lot of energy and speed. And both of them can be iconic.

My customers represent large international companies such as BMW Motorrad and Indian Motorcycles for which I have photographed press photos for new model releases, as well as smaller companies, associations and of course everyday dog owners and breeders.

As a dog photographer, I work for the Swedish Kennel Club where I do editorial assignments for articles in their members' magazine. I take photos for their photo archive and I regularly attend dog shows as a ring photographer to eternalize the group and BIS winners.

The biggest job to date that I've done as a dog photographer was the job I did for PostNord (Swedish Post Authority) in 2020.

The Swedish Kennel Club and PostNord had a competition where the winner had his dog portrayed on a stamp. And I was given the amazing assignment of taking these photographs, which later became stamps.

Those were a few really memorable weeks, just when Covid hit Sweden and there were big discussions about lock down. Amidst it all I had to travel all over Sweden to meet these dogs who of course lived in different parts of Sweden, which is a geographically long country as you know. It was a surreal experience travelling 3500 km through Sweden and it was more or less empty everywhere. But it's a job that I'm glad I did.

One positive side effect of Covid, was that it opened some new doors. With limited contact and canceled jobs, Covid also opened the door to new digital meeting places. So, a year and a half ago, I started holding photography courses via Zoom. It's among the most fun things I've ever done! It's so incredibly rewarding to teach other people to take pictures and especially when it comes to dogs. To be able to follow their progress and see what they manage to achieve after just a few weeks of coursework, it's an incredibly satisfying job!

WHAT OR WHO GOT YOU STARTED PHOTOGRAPHING DOGS?

I've photographed animals and nature all my life, but when I got my first Ridgeback in 2007, it





became like a drug. Not a day went by without her getting caught on film during those first few years.

What type of cameras do you shoot with? Which is your favourite lens and why?

Apart from my mobile camera I only work with DSLR cameras from Canon. My first-choice camera is a Canon 1dx Mark III and my back up is a Canon 5d mark III. My favorite lens is the Canon 85mm 1.2, but the choice of lens depends entirely on the assignment and the challenges that the assignment brings.

WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION?

Being a photographer means a lot of travelling. I find it extremely inspiring visiting new countries and other cultures. I get inspired by anything from nature, food to culture.

Meeting different dog owners together with their beloved dogs, watching their relationship and the way they work together is so rewarding and inspiring whether they live in northern Sweden or southern Italy.

DO YOU CONSIDER IT A CHALLENGING JOB? HOW DO YOU GET THE ANIMALS TO STAY AND "POSE" FOR YOU?

Yes, it can be very challenging!

It's all about training, timing and getting a good collaboration with the dog. The photoshoot is always on the dog's terms and it's my job to make sure that the dog likes what we do and is comfortable in the situation.

Taking pictures of my own dogs, it's often just me and my dog, and then I have no one to help. When I grab the camera and a package of meatballs, my dogs go crazy and everyone wants to come along. They just love a photoshoot.

I train a lot of balance training with my dogs; I begin at puppy stage. I generally train a lot with my dogs. Everything from obedience training and tricks to all kind of nose training such as field tracking and tracking people, nosework and scent work.

Collaboration is the key word, it's my job to make sure we have fun together, regardless of whether it's a photoshoot or obedience training. And I only train using positive reinforcement.

If I work with someone else's dog, I always have the dog owner assisting. Then it's often a matter of getting a collaboration with the owner so that she or he understands what I mean.

Some dogs are completely untrained in everything but I still have to deliver a great picture. In those cases, it's important for me to be able to read the dog and try to create a situation where the dog can cooperate. That was the case when I was going to photograph one of the "stamp dogs" mentioned earlier. One of these dogs was quite shy with a lot of integrity. It could not sit or lie down on command and there was a lot of prey drive in him, so he could barely be off leash. On top of all that there was a whole family where everyone had varying levels of stress over the photo shoot. My job was still to deliver the best pictures in the world.

In those situations, it's important not to get stressed but try to build a relationship with the

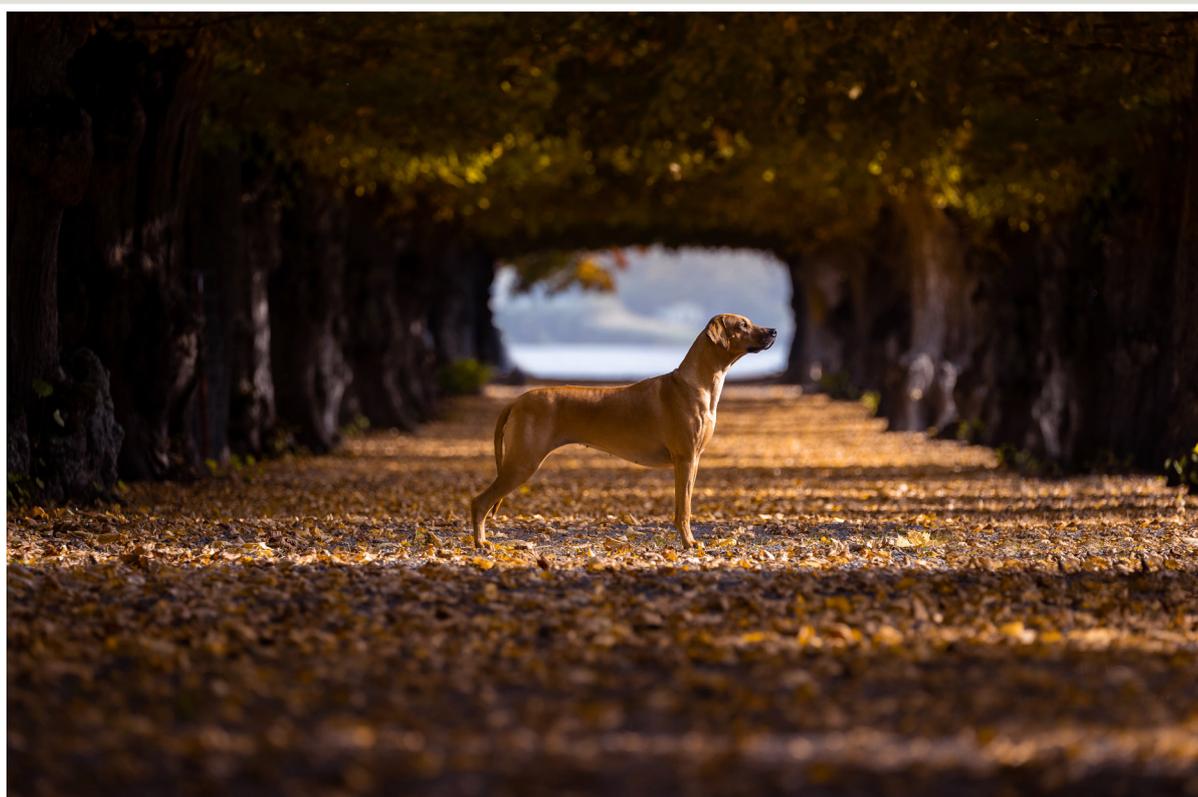


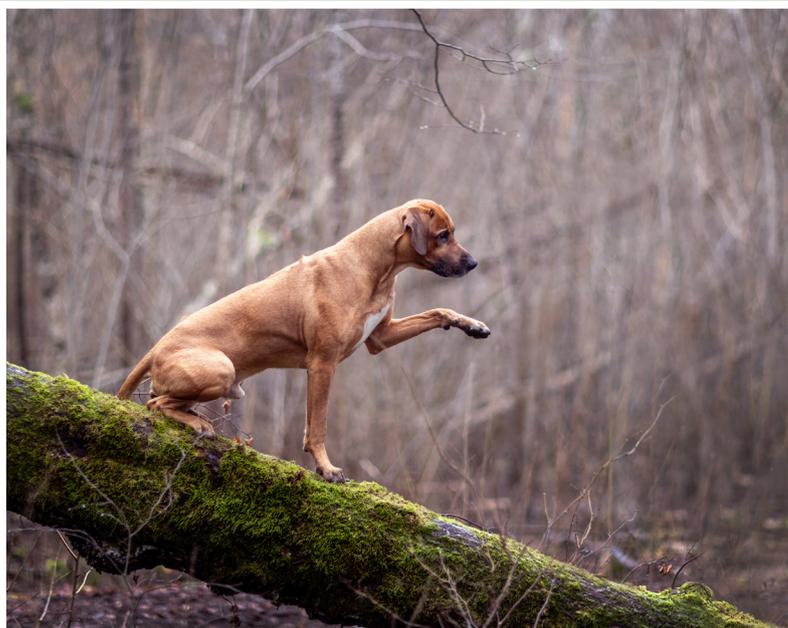
dog in a short period of time and at the same time get the owners to relax so that they can do their best for their dog. Also, making sure the dog keeps it together and doesn't get tired too quickly. In the end I got a series of great photos. But I'll never forget that shoot – it was a challenge!

One of the most basic things that I think works to get a dog to hold a position in most cases, is "reverse luring". Many times, I'll get the dog to understand that game in a short time, so we're able to take some fantastic pictures.

If you want to learn more about reverse luring I highly recommend The Dog Trainer Vicky Miles at VM. She has a bunch of great online training tips and courses. We made a course together named "Hold That Pose", for dogs that have to perform in front of a camera. It's only available in Swedish at the moment, but she's releasing an English version this spring. www.vicky-miles.com

Or, sign up for one of my photo courses that are available both via Zoom or in real life - in Sweden or abroad when requested!





I love my job as a dog photographer, and I see every photo session as an opportunity to grow. I always want to get better at my profession. I have yet to take my best photograph.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF BEING A FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER? AND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

The best part is that I have the best job in the world! I love shooting dogs and every dog meeting is unique. I work both as a fine art photographer and as a documentary photographer for editorial articles and for advertising assignments.

When I work for a dog owner, I always try to find the best in that dog. To see the uniqueness in the dog that only a dog owner can see. To convey that feeling in a picture. The joy that photos of a dog can give their owner is priceless.

It is also incredibly satisfying to have a dog do things that the owners didn't think were possible. It can be anything from "my dog will never go out in the water", or "it will never be able to sit still" to "it will never dare getting up on that thing" etc. There are many times I want to give a high five to the dog.

When I work with editorial assignments or for a specific advertisement, it's important that I've done my homework on the assignment before I get there. When I shoot for magazines, I usually work with a journalist. We meet the person that is to be interviewed together and I get a to build a rapport with the dog, understand the dog's job and get a feeling for what ambience the photos need to relay. I've photographed a blood donor dog, and capturing the skills that that dog needs to do his job is different from capturing the skills of a scent-dog searching for drugs or weapons.

When I work for veterinary clinics, I need to create a completely different feeling for those pictures. The dog owners who will visit the clinic need to gain

confidence in the staff and their skills through the pictures presented on the website.

When I work for breeders, I need to show off breed-typical presentations of their dogs.

I remember a very challenging shoot a few years ago. I was at a dog show and I needed pictures of all the group winners. All of a sudden, a storm broke out and the rain was pouring down. The winner was about to run out from the ring and I had to shout out loud so she would hear me. I forced her to stay for a picture... The second after this picture, the tent with all the judges in it went up in air and it was all a bit of a panic. But I got my picture and it was great! The organizer has even used this image as an advertisement for their exhibition.

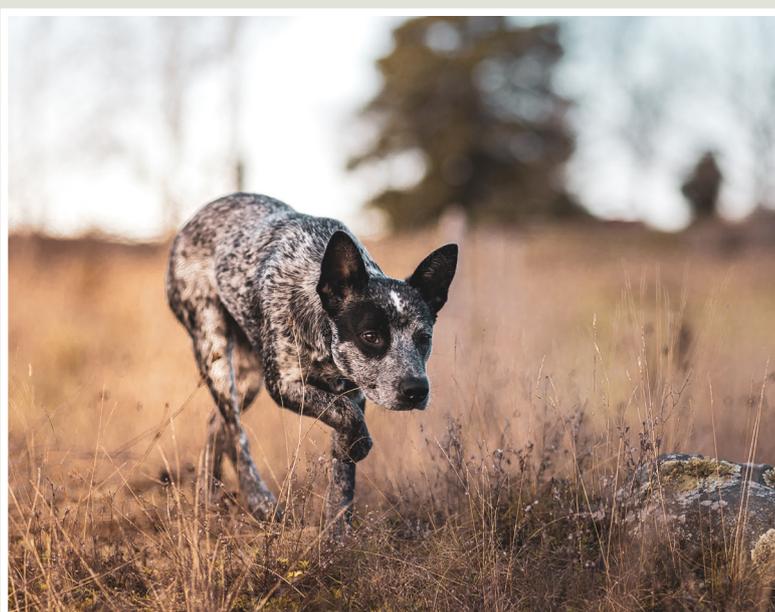
DESCRIBE A TYPICAL SESSION FOR US. WHAT KINDS OF THINGS ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE CAMERA?

In my mind there is almost no "typical session in dog photography";)

But if, for example, I'm going to photograph a stud dog, then there are some typical pictures that most people want. These are standing/stacked pictures, portraits and the dog in motion, preferable while trotting, from the side so you can see the gait and stride.

Then it's important to get acquainted with the breed that I'm going to portray, I have to know about the breed standard, what's desirable and what's less desirable in this particular breed.

I'm of the opinion that we don't retouch this type of image! A photo of a stud dog or a brood bitch should represent the dog as it looks. It's my job, along with the handler, to bring out the absolute best in that dog, to find the angle where the dog looks its best.





If the dog, for example, has a weak back, it is important for me to find an angle that doesn't exaggerate that weakness. If I find an angle where the weak back doesn't become so prominent, it's perfectly okay. But I must absolutely not go in and retouch the picture afterwards so that it looks like the dog has a strong back. In my mind, that's both morally and ethically wrong!

If the assignment is for an everyday dog owner that just wants some great pictures of their dog, then it's pretty much up to the dog owner what they want. What does the owner look for in this picture? Do they have a request for a special location? Should it be bathing in a lake, pictures of a training session or just some fantastic pictures in nature or the dog with the children or the owner? In a photo shoot like that, the most important thing is to have a happy dog and a lot of treats with you. Preferably a thermos with coffee and some good cake, a true Swedish fika. Then it tends to be a good day.

WHICH BREED IN YOUR OPINION IS MOST PHOTOGENIC?

Well, here I am deeply biased. The Ridgeback has an obvious first place in my heart. But then it depends on what you mean by photogenic? All dog breeds have their own special character. I would say more that there are different photogenic individuals within all dog breeds. If you mean photogenic as aristocratic, then sighthounds are high on that list. If photogenic is sweetness, then there are many super cute small fluffy dogs and puppies. Some Ridgebacks are definitely not photogenic, but then they can have a quirkiness that is fun and nice to see in the picture.

Weimaraner is a breed that I really like and if I have to choose a breed that I equate to being photogenic (and not choose the Ridgeback) it would be Weimaraner. But they are very reminiscent of the ridgeback. They can be everything from very beautiful to just plain comical. One of my great idols in dog photography is William Wegman, if you have seen his pictures you will understand.

ARE THERE OTHER DOG PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT INSPIRE OR INFLUENCE YOU? IF NOT, WHO OR WHAT DOES?

As I mentioned earlier, William Wegman, he's a great inspiration. If you see his pictures bear in mind that he doesn't do re-touch. He teaches the dogs to do the tricks and then he takes the picture.

IS THERE ANY ONE THING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN OR PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO AN ASPIRING FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER?

Being a good photographer is to a certain extent dependent on the equipment you have, because if you have better equipment, you can produce better quality images. But at the end of the day, no amount of equipment can replace the innate ability to recognise what will make a great image and knowing how to capture it with the camera.

When it comes to dog photography you need to know a lot about dogs. You need the skill to "read dogs". Dogs are more than a just cute face, there's

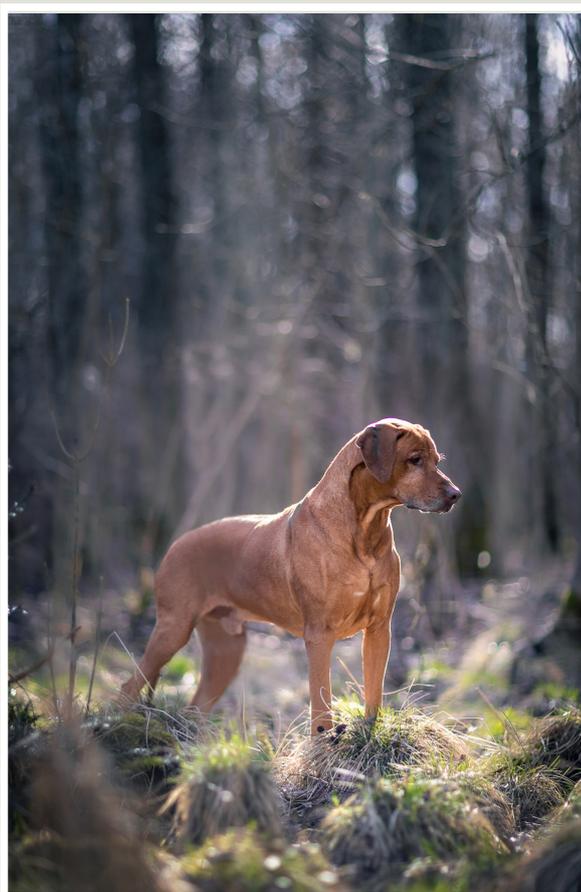
a lot of right and wrong when it comes to the exterior of a purebred dog, its attitude and right state of mind when it comes to stress level and engagement, and so on.

In today's society with social media, it's all about pictures. When I grew up, having to sit through a dinner party and looking at the host's holiday snaps was the ultimate in a bad night out. Today you see everything from everybody's life, all the time, often the second after it actually happened.

In some way we all need to be better photographers today, compared to just 10-15 years ago. You have like a milli second to get people's attention with your pictures before they've scrolled past your post.

Being a photographer today isn't easy. People have unreasonably high demands on themselves. They buy a camera and then expect to take amazing photos. But I say, you don't become a bestselling author just because you bought a typewriter. And please bear in mind that a lot of the images you see on the internet are not necessarily great photos, they're just images that have had a lot of retouching done to them. Comparing yourself to someone who is great at using photoshop while you're still learning how to master your camera isn't fair. I'm not saying that retouching an image is a bad thing, but if you want to be a great photographer you need to start by learning how to take great photos with your camera, learning to see what's a great shot and what's a great photoshop creation. Someday you might master both skills, but start with mastering photography. For all of you wanting to become a better photographer I have a tip. Practice, practice, practice, and have fun!

Everybody can become a better photographer with practice. You need to take a whole bunch of bad photos to get that super picture! It's not a failure to come home with +2000 pics in the camera and not be satisfied with a single one. If you had a great time with your dog, hopefully the dog is satisfied after some fresh air and training. And you just have to load up the camera again and look forward to the joy of doing it all over again.



DO YOU HAVE ANY PETS OF YOUR OWN? AND WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ANIMAL?

Today I have 3 dogs at home. In my youth I was a "horse fanatic" so after dogs in the first place, a unicorn has to come in second place.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD SOMETHING?

There's no such thing as bad light or bad weather when it comes to photography. It's just different light and different weather. Maybe not a desirable one, but that's a whole different thing. Try to make the most of the situation you have!

