

Statement

TENDER BEASTS by Ashley Norwood Cooper

“Not Carnegie, Vanderbilt, and Astor together could have raised money enough to buy a quarter share in my little dog.”

E.T. Seton

I have been painting a lot of dogs. Also, cats, bees, butterflies, and the occasional chickadee. Have I gone soft? Perhaps. But Titian, Manet, Freud, and Hockney have all painted excellent dogs. Goya’s painting, ‘The Drowning Dog,’ may be the most profound expression of fear and vulnerability in all of art. The dog is a worthy subject.

It has been a difficult year for me. In our happiest times, dogs wait for us. We race about with friends and appointments and, at the end of the day, say, “I need to get home to let the dog out.” In trying times, animals and nature sustain us. At least that is how it is for me. I take comfort in the birds at my bird feeder, and the butterflies and bees in my poorly weeded garden. When my heart races at night, I reach for the warm ball of fur that is sleeping next to me.

Artist’s statements are for artists with grand plans. People who set out to make art “about something.” I am just a habitual painter. My paintings reflect my life and what I see around me. This year, what I see is the tender beasts, living with more kindness and more dignity than humans. Ours is an economy of attention. The worst kind of people are screaming at us all day and night, “Look at me, buy what I am selling, fear what I tell you to fear.” In such a world, it is a form of resistance to turn away, forget them all, and just love your dog.

- Ashley Norwood Cooper