

Inventing the Dog



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by Stephanie Zimmer



Introduction

Inventing the Dog is both a celebration and typological study of the world of purebred dogs. Its photographs examine dogs' huge variety of form and size, also showcasing their unique personalities and noting their genetic problems. Most purebred dogs have been bio-engineered over hundreds, and in some cases thousands of years, to serve a specific purpose for humans - for hunting or herding, sport or protection, or simply to serve as companion animals exhibiting characteristics that are attractive to their owners. Dog shows such as those held by the American Kennel Club rank and reward contestants on the basis of their adherence to strict physical standards, regardless of whether the breed's distinctive appearance is associated with chronic health issues.



All featured dogs are shown in dog-show stance, clearly defining the outline of its shape. The corresponding portrait emphasizes its personality, intended to bring each animal to life as an individual. Dogs are shown large to small (on the cover) to indicate the remarkable differences in their dimensions. In addition to serving as a typological study, this also reflects the long history of dogs becoming progressively smaller as their breeding as taken them further from their wolf ancestors. Each portrait is photographed against a different background color to emphasize the difference in dogs' personalities and to bring each animal to life as an individual.

I selected most of the dogs featured in this book through Instagram, finding them with breed-specific hashtags. I also photographed my own dog, an English Bulldog, and started her own Instagram page. In representing the dog not just as a specific breed but as an animal with its own, individual characteristics, my purpose is to allow viewers to relate to the subjects much as they might to their own pets or even family members. The text that accompanies each image highlights a single physical or medical problem for each breed, but it's important to note that many of these genetic issues are internal and invisible. In this respect, the canines in *Inventing the Dog* are not fundamentally different than human beings, who suffer from a variety of genetic problems—many of them related to their belonging to specific ethnic group or part of an otherwise limited gene pool. My hope is that this connection will help viewers relate to the subjects on a more personal level, and bring greater understanding and empathy to canine nature and origins.



Samoyed

Believed to be one of the world's oldest breeds of dog, dating back at least 3,000 years, Samoyeds were developed for hunting, herding reindeer, and pulling sledges in the Siberian snow. Their thick, double-layered coat allows them to tolerate extremely low, sub-zero temperatures. Most English and American Samoyeds are descended from animals that pulled early sledge expeditions out of the Arctic and Antarctic. As with many large breeds, these dogs may suffer from Canine Hip Dysplasia (CHD)—an abnormal formation of the hip socket that causes temporary crippling and arthritis. Samoyeds are loyal to their owners and protective of their human families.





Circeco dell'Etna

Developed long before records of purebreds were kept, the Cirnecho dell'Etna is believed to have been bred for rabbit hunting in Sicily about 3000 years ago. It is one of the few dog breeds that acquired its modern characteristics through natural selection rather than human intervention. A rugged dog, it was and is able to withstand the hot, dry environment and rugged terrain of Mount Etna, Europe's highest active volcano, where over half of its population still resides. Only 200 specimens of the dog are believed to be in the United States, and the American Kennel Club only recognized the breed in 2015. The breed is relatively healthy, but like all coursing dogs (those that chase prey by sight, not smell) is prone to muscle tears and toe injuries when highly active. Along with their athleticism, these dogs are gentle, loyal, and require little maintenance.





Italian Greyhound

Originally bred during the Roman Empire to hunt small game, Italian Greyhounds take their modern form from a resurgence in popularity in the Middle Ages. The breed thrived by gaining favor with European aristocracy as a companion animal. Italian Greyhounds are fast and agile but fragile. Their very thin legs are prone to breaks, and it is not uncommon for them to break one or both legs after jumping off furniture, landing badly or falling when they run, or being stepped on by accident. This delicate-looking breed is active and loving towards its family, but tends to have a nervous nature and may be frightened by strangers.





Pug

Pugs originated in the Han dynasty in China around 200 B.C., and were bred by royal families. They were so prized by Chinese Emperors that they were even guarded by soldiers. Pugs were brought to the West in the 16th century, when China began trading with Europe. They are generally a sedentary lap dog, friendly but stubborn. Due to their prominent, bulging eyes they are prone to various eye problems, including proptosis, (in which the eyeball pops out of its socket), keratoconjunctivitis sicca (dry eye syndrome), Cherry Eye, corneal ulcers and progressive retinal atrophy, which gradually leads to blindness.





Briard

The Briard is believed to date back to 8th-century France, bred to herd and guard sheep. Some famous Briard owners included Napoleon and Thomas Jefferson and in World War I and II, the French used them as search-and-rescue dogs for wounded soldiers and pulled supply carts. They are intelligent, active and independent, yet still protective of their family. Like other large breeds, they are prone to Gastric Torsion (bloat) but they can also be prone to congenital stationary night blindness.





Bulldog

Bulldogs were bred for baiting bulls in bullfights in 15th-century England, but they didn't develop their distinctive look until after the sport was banned there in 1835. The succeeding 50-year evolution of the breed's characteristics maintained its compressed facial features, which were originally intended to allow the dog to cling a bull's nose ring. This facial structure results in Brachycephalic Airway Obstruction Syndrome (BAOS), a trait that causes respiratory problems that may lead to heat stroke and collapse of the larynx. While English Bulldogs were originally bred for the aggressiveness needed in sport fighting, breeders have worked to reduce or remove this fierceness over the years. These dogs are known for being friendly and patient, though stubborn by nature.





Great Dane

Great Danes were bred by 17th-century German nobility to hunt wild boar and bear. They were trained to seize these large animals and hold them in place until a human hunter could kill them. Over years of breeding, the ferocious nature needed to confront wild animals was toned down, and now Great Danes are known as “gentle giants,” sweet and affectionate. Like many large breeds, they are prone to gastric torsion, commonly known as bloat. If they are exercised right after eating, the stomach can twist and cut off blood circulation, which may be fatal if untreated.









Pomeranian

The Pomeranian is a miniaturized version of the spitz group of Arctic sled dogs. Bred to a smaller size during the 17th century in northeastern Europe's Pomerania (now part of Poland and western Germany), the dog gained popularity after Queen Victoria brought specimens back from Italy and began breeding and showing them. This is believed to be the origin of its even smaller current size. Pomeranians are intelligent, independent, and curious about their surroundings. Toy versions' trachea do not possess normal rigidity, though, so are at risk of collapsing as the dog inhales. For this reason the use of a harness in place of a collar is recommended.





Shih Tzu

Believed to have originated in 17th-century Tibet to be tiny replicas of lions, Shih Tzu were bred as companions and watchdogs for monks in lamaseries. One such specimen was famously given as a gift by a long-ago Dalai Lama to the Chinese emperor. Shi Tzus are loyal, gentle, and cheerful, and also possess a fearlessness that belies their small size. They are prone to patellar luxation in the knee, common in toy breeds. Though treatable, this occurs when the kneecap becomes dislocated, making it difficult for the dog to walk.





French Bulldog

A wave of immigration to France after the 19th century's Industrial Revolution brought with it the first miniature bulldogs from England. They became so popular there that breeders in England started to export bulldogs they believed to be too small or with faults, such as ears fully standing up and fulfilling the demand in France. Like its cousin the English Bulldog, this breed is brachycephalic, meaning that it may suffer from breathing difficulties due to a flat facial structure.





Yorkshire Terrier

In the mid 1800s miners and mill workers from Scotland traveled to England looking for work, and brought their small terrier dogs with them. The Yorkie, as this breed was ultimately nicknamed, was taken into mines and mills to control the rat population, and was also used to hunt badgers and foxes. Like other miniature, toy, and small dog breeds, Yorkshire Terriers are prone to Legg-Calvé-Perthes Disease (LCPD), a condition in which the leg's femoral head spontaneously disintegrates, destroying the hip joint and making it impossible for the dog to walk. The disease mainly affects puppies, and treatment is a surgical procedure called femoral head ostectomy (FHO)—basically a total hip replacement.





Doberman Pinscher

A German tax collector, Louis Dobermann, is credited with developing the Doberman Pinscher in the late 1800s. He wanted a guard dog to protect him from angry taxpayers on his collection route. The breed is still commonly used as a guard dog and for police and military purposes, and now also as rescue and therapy dogs. Dobermans are known for their fearlessness, loyalty, and obedience. Their elongated neck gives them a noble appearance but also makes them prone to cervical vertebral instability (CVI), also known as Wobbler syndrome for its effect on their gait. Caused by malformation of the vertebrae in the neck, CVI causes pressure on the spinal cord and may lead to weakness, lack of coordination, and even paralysis in the dog's hindquarters.





Miniature Schnauzer

Adapted from their larger, Medieval ancestors, Miniature Schnauzers were developed to be farm dogs, bred to kill rats and other vermin in late 19th-century Germany. They are one of the few breeds in the terrier group that was not a product of England. A breed-related weakness of the bladder can lead to infections that sometimes cause painful bladder stones (known as struvite stones). This problem can usually be resolved with antibiotics, but sometimes requires surgery. Miniature Schnauzers are known for being friendly and fearless, and are also highly intelligent, obedient, and anxious to please.





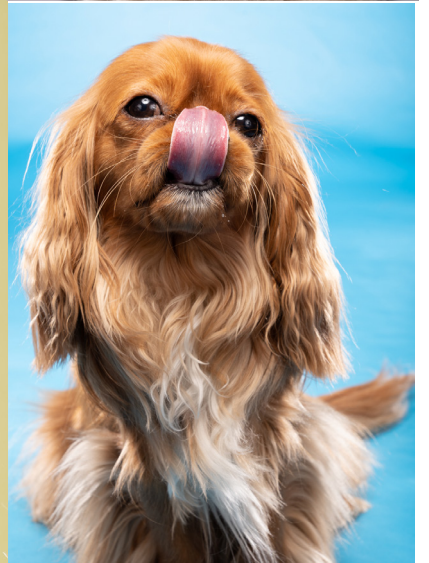
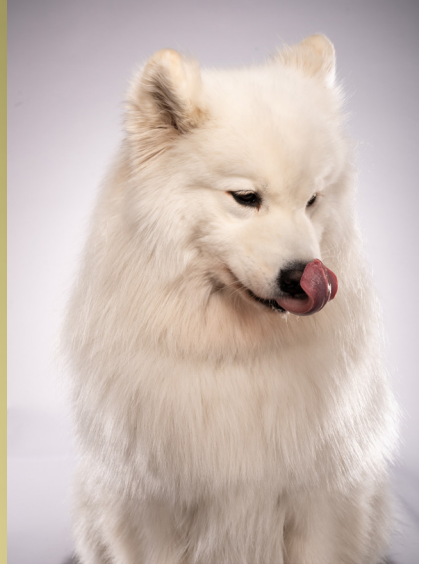
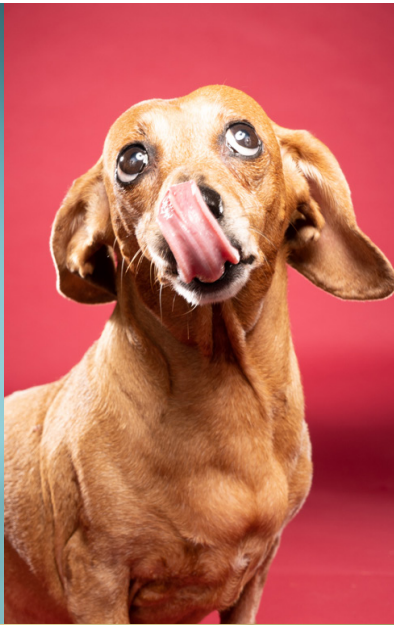
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

This dog was named for King Charles II of England, known as the “Cavalier King,” who was said to have been more concerned with breeding his beloved spaniels than ruling Britain. The breed was virtually extinct, though, until a wealthy American dog lover offered a prize to a British breeder who could resurrect it in 1926. These distinctive spaniels are known for being loving, trusting, and easygoing. Unfortunately they are heavily afflicted by mitral valve disease (MVD), in which the heart’s mitral valve is prevented from closing after blood flows from the atrium to the ventricle. The disorder affects over half of all Cavalier King Charles Spaniels by the age of five and almost all by the age of ten, and is the breed’s leading cause of death.





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