

Starling

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART'S FEATHERED IMITATOR

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a true child prodigy. Even at the age of seven, the highly talented composer and musician was on tour with his sister, Anna. His father, who wanted to make the extraordinary skills of both his children well known, organized a concert tour for the whole family to the most important cities in Europe. It was not until Wolfgang was twenty-five that he settled down as an independent composer in Vienna.

In 1784, Wolfgang walked past a pet shop near his home and heard a bird sing a familiar tune. He found out which bird had been singing—a starling—and bought it. At home he wrote down the notes of the birdsong with the comment: "That was wonderful!" To his astonishment, the melody was similar to one of his own compositions. We'll never know who invented the song first, but starlings are renowned for perfectly imitating the songs of other birds. It's possible that someone had whistled Wolfgang's song while walking past the pet store, maybe even Wolfgang himself!

Wolfgang loved his pet starling very much. So much so that after its death, he invited his friends and family to a solemn funeral in his garden. In the three years that the starling was with him, Wolfgang created some of his most important works, notably the operas *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) and *Don Giovanni* (1787).



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Born in Salzburg, Austria, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote over six hundred compositions, even though he passed away at the age of just thirty-five. By the age of twelve, Wolfgang had already composed three operas. His final opera, *The Magic Flute* (1791), featured a character named Papageno, who attracted birds with his flute. This modest figure with a good heart had only one wish—to find a partner for life. Just like a starling does!







Snowball

ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S LUCKY CAT

When Ernest Hemingway decided he wanted to become a writer, he got himself hired as a reporter for a Kansas City newspaper. He soon made a name for himself reporting on wars all over the world—from the First World War in Italy and the Spanish Civil War, to wars in the Middle East and China, as well as the Second World War.

After each of these tumultuous experiences, he liked to recover in nature. One of his favorite places was Key West, Florida, a small island he considered paradise on earth. Ernest loved to take a boat out to fish in the sea. One day a ship's captain gave him a fisherman's lucky charm—a cat with six toes. Fishermen liked to keep cats on board their vessels as mouse catchers. Cats with extra toes (called polydactyl cats) were the best mouse catchers because they could cling onboard no matter the weather.

Ernest named his six-toed lucky charm Snowball. The white cat quickly made itself at home. Before long the property teemed with Snowball's offspring, all with extra toes. Today Ernest's house is a museum that celebrates the writer's life and work. It's also home to around fifty polydactyl cats, all of whom are descended from Snowball.

When Ernest was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954, he was unable to travel to Stockholm to accept the honor due to his poor health. So the prize was brought to him in Cuba, where he was living in the countryside at the time, along with his wife, eleven cats, nine dogs, a cow, an owl, and hundreds of books.



Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois. In the 1920s, he lived in Paris for a short period and met many famous artists and writers there, including Dorothy Parker (see 14). His best-known novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, appeared in 1952 and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize the following year.



Bustopher Jones, Mungojerrie & Rumpleteazer

T.S. ELIOT'S CATS

Thomas Stearns Eliot was a famous English poet with a very unique style. Not everyone found his poems easy to understand. However, he was able to reach one particular group of demanding readers—children.

Thomas used to write poems for his godchildren about a certain subject close to his heart. Cats! Among some of his velvety pawed characters were Bustopher Jones, Mungojerrie, and Rumpleteazer. The poet went out of his way to find the right names for his cats. He believed that if a cat was given the wrong name, it could not lift its tail or show off its whiskers. Thomas wrote amusing verses about cats and their unique behaviors. In 1939, he collected all of these poems into *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. "Old Possum" was poet Ezra Pound's pet name for Thomas. It's only fitting that a pet name is in the title of Thomas's most popular book, still read by kids of all ages everywhere.

One of these children was the English composer and playwright Andrew Lloyd Webber, who was inspired by Thomas's stories to create the musical *Cats* in 1981. Even today you can take in a show to hear a chorus of Jellicle cats meow the words of Thomas's popular poems.



T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He spent much of his time reading, especially poetry, maybe because his mother was a poet herself. After studying in literature and philosophy, he decided to live in the country of his ancestors, England. There he published novels, poems, and plays. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948.





Puce

HENRI MATISSE'S BLACK CAT

At first, Henri Matisse wanted to become a lawyer. If he had not become sick and bedridden for a while, his mother would not have given him paints and a brush. From that point on, Henri only wanted to paint for the rest of his life. And with that, he enrolled at the Paris Academy of Art.

Henri tried many different styles, but what excited him the most were colors. Though he had been taught to represent nature as accurately as possible, he created a totally different world of bright red and violet trees, blue faces, and yellow cats. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Henri and his fellow painters were called *les Fauves*, which means "wild beasts" in French. His paintings appealed to a wide audience, partly because of the tranquility they radiated. The source of this serenity might have been his home life, where he had created a mini-paradise with many plants, birds, a dog, and especially several cats.

When Henri was again bedridden due to illness in the 1940s, his cats Minouche, Coussi, and la Puce ("the flea") kept him company. Puce, a black cat with a small white spot on its chest, had marked his bed as her territory. Henri's cats sat for hours next to him as he worked in bed with scissors and paper to cut out shapes from colored papers and then arranged them into vibrant composition. In the final year before his death and when he was almost blind, the *Snail* was created, which at almost 3 meters in size is a celebration of colors!



Henri Matisse (1869-1954)

Henri Émile Benoît Matisse was born in Le Cateau-Cambrésis in northern France on New Year's Eve. He was one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. In his later life, poor health prevented him from painting on canvas and easel. Instead, he turned to cutouts, a technique where he cut shapes out of colored paper and then arranged them into masterpieces.



Pluto & Elia

LUCIAN FREUD'S MODELS

The painter Lucian Freud, grandson of Sigmund Freud (see page 20), was born in Berlin. He moved to England with his family when he was ten to escape the persecution of Jews in Germany.

There are dog lovers in all generations of the Freud family, but Lucian shared a further peculiarity with his grandfather: both involved their pets in their work. While Sigmund's chow Jofi assisted in his therapy sittings, Lucian's whippet Pluto sat for him as a model.

Lucian painted true-to-life pictures. He tried to portray people and dogs on the canvas exactly as they were. This required a lot of patience from both the artist and his models. His sensitive portraits and nudes were created over months or sometimes years. Totally motionless, Pluto would peek out of the corner of one eye as Lucian applied one coat of paint after the other. Lucian worked hard to paint his subjects as openly and honestly as possible. Viewers of his paintings felt both fascinated and uncomfortable by such vulnerability. But it's what gives his paintings such energy.

Pluto was part of Lucian's work for fifteen years. When she became older, her great, great-niece Eli took her place in the studio, while Pluto relaxed. Eli was Lucian's gift to his long-time assistant David Dawson. The two can be seen together in Lucian's last painting, *Portrait of the Hound* (2011).



Lucian Freud (1922-2011)

Lucian Freud achieved international fame for his portraits and nudes. His career as the most important portrait painter of the twentieth century lasted over seventy years. In 2001, he even did a portrait of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.





Choupette

KARL LAGERFELD'S MEDIA STAR

For over sixty years, Karl Lagerfeld was one of the most influential fashion designers of the twentieth century. From a young age he was known for cutting photos out of magazines, closely examining the clothing styles of his friends, and drawing sketches for hours on end. He is best known for his designs for Chanel.

There was simply nothing ordinary about Karl. And the same can be said for Choupette, a white Burmese he was supposed to be caring for over Christmas 2011. She was just a couple of months old at that time and never let her "temporary" master out of her sight. The two had become inseparable. "I never thought I could fall in love like this," said Karl, who totally pampered Choupette. She ate with him at the same table, she had her own little plate, she wore a diamond-encrusted collar, and even had her own assistant! She appeared as a model herself and soon became a media star through photo sessions and fashion shows. She has her own Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, and even a book called *Choupette: The Private Life of a High-Flying Cat*.

Karl jokingly complained that the cat would soon be more famous than he was. He even said that he would have married Choupette if a marriage between man and animal were at all possible.



Karl Lagerfeld (1933-2019)

Karl Otto Lagerfeld was born in Hamburg, Germany, but spent most of his life in Paris, France. In his career as fashion designer, designer, photographer, and costume designer, he worked for major fashion houses and brands. He designed male and female fashion under his own name continuously from 1974. From 1983, he was active as the creative director and chief designer of the French fashion house Chanel, leading it to international success.



Stanley & Boodgie

DAVID HOCKNEY'S DACHSHUNDS

Although David Hockney was born in chilly, rainy England, since 1964 he has spent most of his life in sunny California. His paintings often capture the sun-drenched swimming pools, villas, and gardens of the rich and beautiful. He often swapped his brushes and pencils for cameras, fax machines, and even his iPad.

When he first encountered his neighbor's dachshunds in the Hollywood Hills overlooking Los Angeles in the 1980s, he immediately fell in love. From then on, David, Stanley, and Boodgie were always together. David has captured his dachshunds on canvas countless times. He set up easels all over the house to be able to paint the animals in all sorts of poses, whether sleeping, lying, sitting, curled up, paws raised in the air, blinking with one eye, or cuddled up on their dog cushions. Sometimes just one alone and sometimes both together. *Dog Days*, an entire book containing eighty-four of these images, was published in 1998.

As David explains, "These two lovely, little creatures are my friends. They are intelligent, loving, funny and often bored. They watch me at work and I observe the warm shapes that they make together, their sadness and their joys." And Hollywood dogs seem to somehow know that a picture of them is being made. "The two of them, and this is typical of Hollywood dogs, pose with the bored expression of someone who is used to being considered very special." And indeed, Stanley and Boodgie are very special to David!



David Hockney (*1937)

David Hockney was born in Bradford, England. After studying at the Royal College of Art, David embarked on a brilliant career as an artist, graphic designer, photographer, lecturer, and stage designer. He became world famous in the 1960s for his cool, brightly painted images of California. David constantly bowled people over with his use of different techniques, ranging from classic painting styles to photo collages, which he made using his iPhone and iPad.





Bo & Chia

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE'S CHOW CHOWS

Georgia O'Keeffe was a true pioneer who led an independent life and did not allow herself to be controlled in her artistic work. In her time, it was unusual for a woman to become a painter. Even as a child on her family farm in Wisconsin in the early 1900s, Georgia felt a strong bond with art and nature. Later, she would find a place where they could be both wonderfully brought together.

While in New York City during the 1930s, where Georgia painted its bold new skyscrapers, she decided to visit the New Mexico desert. She was fascinated by the light, by the colors of the soil, the stones, and the animal bones she found there. In 1940, she settled down in a simple mud brick house in the New Mexico village of Abiquiú.

Shortly after she moved in, a neighbor thought the painter seemed a bit lonely and gave her two jet-black chow chow puppies—Bo and Chia. Georgia instantly fell in love. Whenever she went to paint in the desert or to the Cerro Pedernal mesa, which can be seen in many of her paintings, Bo and Chia were by her side. Her connection to the animals was very intense. Even as her friends died, she felt her best companions—Bo and Chia—were still with her. She talked about them in her letters to friends and family and was devoted to the needs of the "little people," as she called her chows. In 1972, she even became a member of the local Chow Chow Club.



Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986)
Georgia O'Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. She went to Chicago to study art and then to New York. It was there that she met the photographer, Alfred Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924. He took over three hundred photographs of her. Some of these can be seen in the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her best-known paintings are close-ups of flowers in bold colors. She received many prizes in her lifetime, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which is the highest award an individual can receive in the United States.



Bimbo

PAUL KLEE'S WHITE TOMCAT

Paul Klee created art with both hands. With his left he painted and drew the bow of his violin, with the right he wrote and held the violin. His grandmother gave him his first set of crayons. Paul would go on to become an outstanding violinist and a world-famous painter.

Paul had cats at his side throughout his life: Mietz, Nuggeli, Chuzli, Bäreli, Joggeli, Seppi, Köbi, Bübli, Chrütli, and Nutz were some of his feline friends. In 1906, a tabby named Fritzi joined his family. When he was away, he asked after Fritzi in every letter he wrote to his wife, asking her to pass on "paw tap" or "cold wet nose kiss" greetings.

Later, when Paul was a professor at the Bauhaus art school in Weimar, Germany, a white angora cat named Bimbo sat in his studio as his constant companion. She would watch from the window sill as the artist mixed his paints for such famous pictures as *The Mountain of the Sacred Cat* (1923) and the *Cat and Bird* (1928).

Paul immortalized his favorite animals in over fifty artworks and 250 mostly blurry photographs. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, a painter friend of Paul Klee, knew about the special relationship between Paul and Bimbo. In his own piece, *Hommage à Klee* (1935/36), the painter is holding a violin in his hand while Bimbo sits near his shoulder.



Paul Klee (1879-1940)

Paul Klee was born near Bern, Switzerland. He moved to Munich in 1906 and later became a German citizen. He was a professor at the influential Bauhaus art school between 1920 and 1931. Given the versatility of his work, he is one of the most original artists of the twentieth century. Today, his work is honored at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern.

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