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Robertson, Rebecca. "Dog Dynasty." *Photo District News (PDN)*, October 2017, p. 20.

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OUR PICKS

BOOK AND EXHIBITION

DOG DYNASTY

William Wegman's first model was Man Ray: a blue Weimaraner with a dark gray coat who loved being photographed. He was followed by Fay Ray, who was a cinnamon color—"feminine, vulnerable, and intense," Wegman writes—and also loved to work. Fay Ray begat Batty; Batty begat Chip; Chip begat Bobbin, and so on. For more than 40 years, Wegman's famous dogs have starred in his dryly witty photos, acting out scenarios drawn from art history and contemporary art, and inspired by philosophy, fashion, design, theater, politics and more. Wegman finds humor in the dogs' deadpan, soulful gazes and impossibly still poses, and in the never-ending ways that photography can deceive the eye.

WILLIAM WEGMAN: BEING HUMAN

Photographs by William Wegman
Text by William Wegman and
William A. Ewing
Chronicle Books
352 pages; 300+ color photographs
\$24.95

"WILLIAM WEGMAN: DRESSED AND UNDERESSED"

September 5-October 28, 2017
Sperone Westwater
257 Bowery
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LEFT: "Contact," 2014, features Topper, one of William Wegman's recent collaborators. A new book argues that his real subject has been human nature.

A new book, *Being Human*, collects more than 300 of Wegman's images, many previously unpublished. In it, William A. Ewing argues, half seriously, that Wegman's true subject is human nature, a charge that Wegman doesn't deny. "I have had an off-and-on aversion to anthropomorphism and for years I made a conscious effort to avoid it, but it is nevertheless embedded in much of the work," he tells Ewing in an interview reprinted in the book. "I think that is how we are wired, to see ourselves."

Ewing organized the book by themes, collecting images into categories such as "Zoo," which includes images of May Ray dressed as a frog and Fay Ray as a wolf. In "Sit!" we see Topper pose on Eames chairs and Penny balance a stool on her rump. "People Like Us" includes the earnest Chundo in a zip-up decorated with an iron-on flag, and Chip looking haughty and a little skeptical in a striped jacket and tie. In his interview, Ewing asks Wegman if he considers himself a portrait photographer like Arnold Newman, who had a set of methods for connecting with subjects. "I sometimes play with language to get a certain look," Wegman tells him. "To make one of my dogs look evil I would walk far away from him. He would squint to try to find me and that gave him the sinister look I was after." Other techniques are simpler. "'Cat' was a big word with many of my dogs. 'Ball' has been an important word until recently, and 'Bone' continues to be promising. But if you keep saying 'Bone,' and you don't deliver, the word crashes and you have to find another word."

—REBECCA ROBERTSON



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