



left, Cerise the Great, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

above, Something Too Dear, oil on canvas, 20" x 26"

## Beautiful Animal Stories

written by Debra Usher

Traverse with me the faraway sea  
Arrive at the coastline of a forgotten age  
Rivers of secrets run through hearts  
Noble, barbaric, and brave

Whisper into the ear  
Of the fiercest beast you see  
Coax him, Come, come,  
And I will paint your dignity.

The work of Olivia Beaumont makes perfect sense to me as I am a true animal person. In my mind they share a special place and communication - so when I first saw Olivia's work I felt an instant connection and affinity towards the images and the artist who could capture such delightful characters on canvas. These lovely and noble Baroque Beasts resonate in my heart.

I wanted to live in a world populated by the curious beasts and well-spoken canines that were portrayed on the canvases that Olivia brought to life. Each one is a story and part of a bigger adventure that sets me down a path of creative joy.

### Awakening the Story

There was a child who believed that when secrets are to be uncovered, only a storyteller or a painter would suffice. Years passed, and Olivia



Olivia B...





previous page, Conspiracy of the Beasts, oil on canvas, 40" x 58"  
above, Poet's Pet, oil on canvas, 8" x 10"

right, A Gentleman of Merit, oil on canvas, 11" x 14"

forgot about the philosophy that she had known as a child. Painting grew to be familiar, while the ability to tell stories seemed like a talent only to be wished for.

Olivia was always passionate about portraiture. A successful portrait could convince her that she would unfailingly recognize the soul portrayed, should they cross her path tomorrow. Olivia states, "I have always been one to become so entranced by the living breathing portrait, that I may doubt the flesh and blood if I saw it before me."

"My portraits of beasts, barbarians, and nobles are interchangeable with the myriad of tragic and sensitive souls I meet," says Olivia. "Some really do walk on four legs, and others I know only between the waking hours, but I dignify them all with portraits."

These stories that she tells now, because she has finally become the storyteller, are of others, but they are also her own. As Cosimo de Medici asserted, "Every painter paints himself."

#### Olivia's Passion

"Painted portraiture is a long-time study and passion of mine," says Olivia. "The Baroque Beast series serves my desire to make portraits using beastly attributes that the viewer can

sympathize with on a level of human emotion. I believe society already identifies certain animals as noble, others as witty, still others as fierce. Because portraiture is semi-permanent, I believe this dignifies those characteristics, be they noble or barbaric."

Long before the beasts permeated her mind and art, Olivia had a passion for human portraiture. This branched into portraits of canines and animals, in which she endeavors to capture a very specific sensibility, a unique and thoughtful creature.

#### Starting down the Path

Olivia is a full time artist that resides in a very small town near Savannah, Georgia. But she will always call California home as she is originally from Long Beach, California. And like the song says "you are always in a California state of mind".

At around the age of eight, Olivia remembers her mother taking a watercolor class. There, while her mother was sitting with her classmates painting a pond at the neighborhood "Nature Center", Olivia kept peeking over her shoulder and making suggestions about which color to use. She found this more fascinating than going off to play with the other children in the garden.

After the course was over, her mother gave her







left, *Arend at Rest*, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

above, *Ancient Traces*, oil on canvas, 11" x 14"

the watercolor set, and to this day she still has the little 12 pan kit.

In her Grade 5 yearbook she even listed "artist" for her future occupation. Olivia's mother encouraged and applauded her interest in drawing and painting, and she arranged for Olivia to spend time with local artists. Here she was introduced to graphic art, pottery, and oil painting during her teen years.

She was also able to complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in drawing and painting at Long Beach State College which proved to be a good foundation for the path she was about to follow.

#### The Adventure Continues

After finishing school Olivia moved to the countryside in Savannah, Georgia. Here she met a jewelry artist who became a close friend and encouraged her to go into business on the internet. Olivia states, "My initial idea was to have a business in pet portraiture, which I still do, but I also spent a year focusing on developing the direction I wanted to go with my own personal work. I had been studying Rembrandt for the past few years and the Baroque Beast series morphed out of my long time interest in human portraiture."

Finally she debuted the series in Savannah after a year of living in Georgia, and it was immediately acclaimed. A year later she joined a local gallery, and the business has continued to grow.

#### Friends and Mentors Along the Way

During her formative years, many individuals helped to inspire her and create new ideas. Sylvia Futino is a Long Beach artist whom Olivia worked with in her early teen years. She taught Olivia to sculpt with clay and also how to perfect the raku technique.

"We would sit in her living room and sculpt torsos from anatomy books," says Olivia. I was impressed with her emphasis on the emotional weight of a sculpture or painting, and she taught me to pursue something greater than accurate rendering. She didn't get paid to teach me, she just saw something in me and wanted to work with me."

Olivia states, "I view art as a language. When I paint, I am a storyteller. I think of the role of Storyteller at the center of a village, weaving the lives of the villagers into something meaningful, beyond everyday life."

Rembrandt van Rijn is a major inspiration to



October Ale, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"



The Historian, oil on canvas, 8" x 10"





Minstrel, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

Olivia, in more than just technique. Rembrandt believed in honesty when painting real subjects, but he was not rigid, he incorporated his imagination with just as much honesty. With his dramatic and luminous portraits and narratives, he was a storyteller of high caliber.

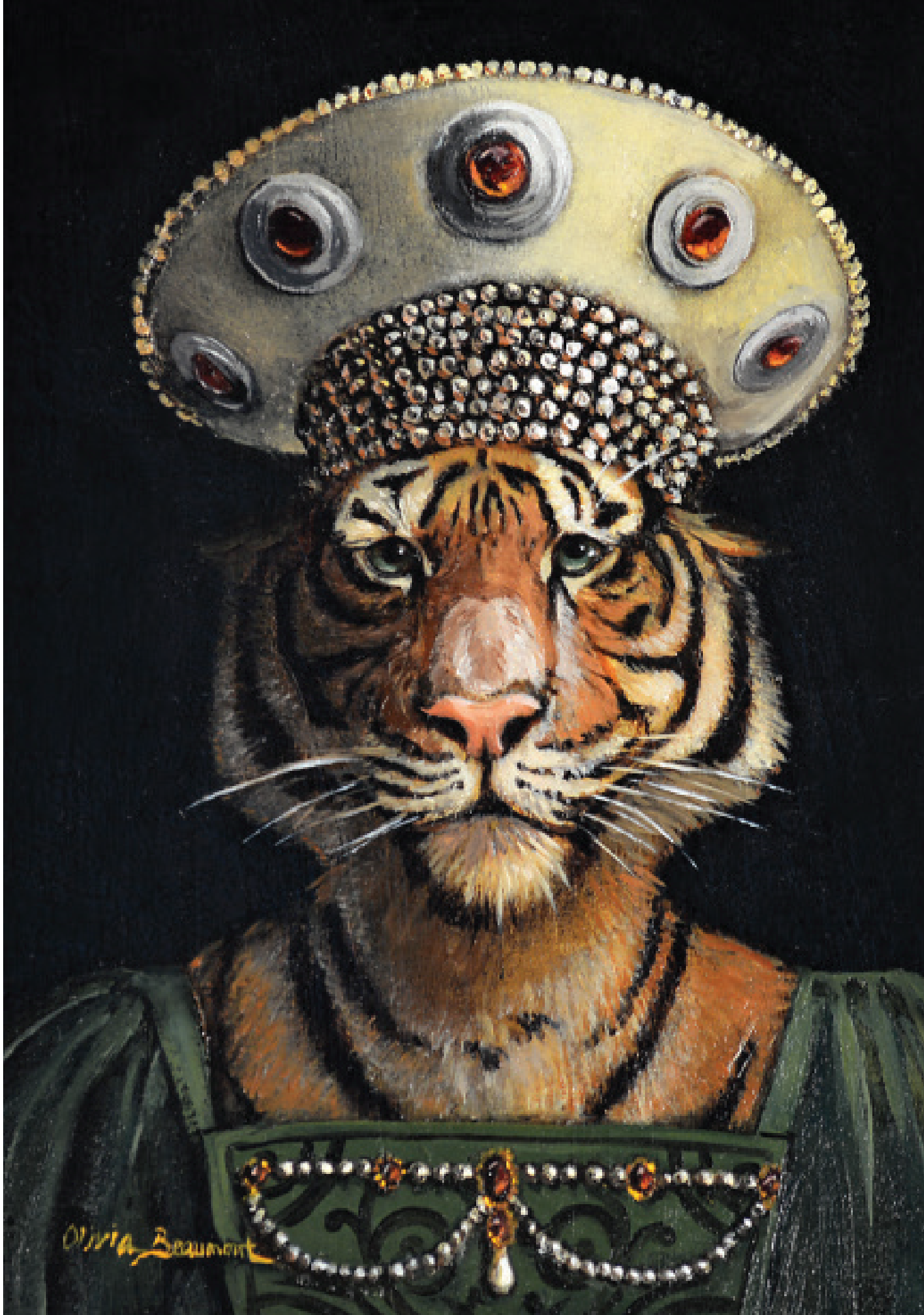
Olivia also had some wonderful professors who honed and accelerated her passion for drawing and painting. The artist anatomy department had one real human skeleton on hand for the students, the rest were bone clones. The professor had known the youth who had donated his bones to the school during a long and declining illness. She considered herself a care-taker of the skeleton, and Olivia was honored when she allowed her to take him home for a period so that she could complete studies and a life size drawing from it. "I literally had a human skeleton in my room for a few weeks," said Olivia.



right, Masquerader, oil on canvas, 8" x 10"







left, Donatella, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"  
above, Titia Van Ulyenburg, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"

Rutherford, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"

#### Inspiration

People, both past, present, mythical, and historical inspire Olivia Beaumont. She becomes interested in a certain human quality and how she can best personify it in her animal characters. She once spent about 9 months trying to find the right creature to depict Delilah in her painting, "Samson and Delilah". Finally she spotted a perfect choice with an article in National Geographic of a "mongoose". Here it was pictured de-feathering a bird and Olivia knew that she had found her Delilah, small and fierce.

I love to see strong narrative work by artists who have honed their oil technique. Cesar Santos, an artist in the U.S, brilliantly creates an ongoing dialogue in his paintings that reference traditional art history while accessing modern themes. I have also kept an eye on the work of David Bailin, another U.S. artist, for years. I am also taken with those who use unexpected mediums, such as Nancy Terry Hooten who uses seed beads to create "paintings" with intricate detail and tactile three-dimensionality.

When Olivia is not painting you can find her

exploring the City Market Galleries in Savannah or going for long walks in the countryside.

Olivia states, "When I am out and about, I go to museums and places where I will feel inspired. Also collecting postcards, art books and cutting out interesting pictures from magazines helps to inspire me as well."

#### Starting a New Work

"Like Rembrandt did, I try to collect objects, clothing, and jewelry that I can use in my paintings," says Beaumont. "At times, I have built my own mannequins out of wire and various objects and dressed them for a sort of still life reference to enhance the characters I paint. Also in her studio are countless art and costume books and unique objects to help put her characters together in her mind.

Olivia Beaumont might be different from many other artists in that she has an extreme amount of patience. Other artists frequently tell her that the type of painting she does and the attention to detail is unusual. But for Olivia there is no other way. This is how the painting becomes a story and





#### The Path

Olivia has always been extremely self motivated and it is hard to find one person or instructor who has influenced her the most. It all started with her mother who encouraged and enabled her to do what she loved and the rest is a series of gifted and inspiring individuals who helped her along the path.

Where the path will go next and who will join her on this magical journey will be to the delight and surprise of us all. Dancing zebras, Horse riding bears – whatever the subject, they will all be portrayed with the love and humour Olivia shares with the world.

I, for one, will be laughing and enjoying the journey with her and her magical friends.

To see more of the work of Olivia Beaumont, email her at [oliviabeaumontart@gmail.com](mailto:oliviabeaumontart@gmail.com) or visit: [beaumontstudio.etsy.com](http://beaumontstudio.etsy.com) and [OliviaBeaumont.blogspot.com](http://OliviaBeaumont.blogspot.com). Work can be seen at the below listed gallery.

Gallery 11 – City Market  
Savannah, Georgia  
[www.savannahcitymarket.com/art/listing](http://www.savannahcitymarket.com/art/listing)

above, Model of Propriety, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"  
right, A Grand Image, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"

is animated to both the artist and the viewer.

Olivia Beaumont always keeps a sketch board on hand so that she is able to sketch a quick record of information or visuals that she can use in her work. These books will inspire her. "I keep every book I fill and sometimes looking back on them years later fuels an idea for a new painting," says Olivia.

Olivia Beaumont gets so many ideas from looking at art in museums and art history books. Her mind seems to embellish and catapult these ideas into unusual and different creatures which find themselves surrounded in extremely theatrical settings. "I look at them, feeling intense awe and reverence and then a surprising moment of humor will bubble up when I least expect it, suddenly the man in the painting is a towering wild bison." says Olivia. "I'll toy with the idea, sketching until I'm ready to put it on canvas."

"I make an accurate drawing before I start a painting," says Olivia. Traditional oil painting happens in layers of thin glazes, and every step informs the next layer. The result is very luminous. I paint every day and always have several paintings going at one time."



Miliner's Daughter, oil on canvas, 5" x 7"

