

WILD ONES

## Paul Wackers and Buddy Are on a Fantastic Voyage

The figurative artist on bringing his rescue pup along on his wild rides, from studio sessions to backpacking expeditions.

BY CAT KRON  
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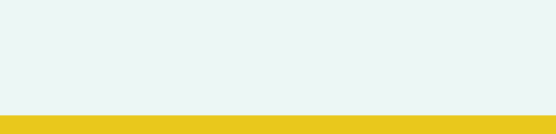


Photo: Brian Ferry

Looking at [Paul Wackers](#)' work is akin to peering into the private collection of an eccentric with exquisite taste. Wackers takes an equal opportunity approach to the anthropological curiosities and *objets d'art* that crowd his canvases, where forms inspired by ancient Greek amphorae and pre-Columbian relics vie for space with pop-graffitied candlesticks. In these paintings, jewel-like organic objects rest in tense balance with the shelves that support them. The artist borrows from iconic artistic styles such as the arching biomorphic lines of the Modernist sculptor Isamu Noguchi to create "knock-offs" of his own devising. Wackers also populates his interiors with "impossible" objects based on actual pieces he makes in his studio.

Hardly the armchair (or studio) anthropologist, however, Wackers is often on the move, exploring the outside world with his pup Buddy, a rescue who works his signature "tongue out, ears up!" pose in venues around the country. We caught up with Wackers, currently in New York with Buddy, where his new work is being exhibited at the [Jack Hanley Gallery](#) in NYC through August 5th.

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**Last year you went on a pretty epic road trip. How did Buddy do?**

Buddy was great. That was our second cross-country trip; the first one was when he was about seven months old, and he's almost seven now. Sometimes he is a little hesitant to get in the car at first, but once we are on the move and doing fun stuff like camping or hiking he's all in.

**How did this handsome pup come into your life? Have you always been a dog person?**

I adopted Buddy from [Social Tees](#), which is a rescue based on the Lower East Side in New York City. I've always been a pet person. We had dogs and cats growing up, and ever since I left my parents' house I always wanted an animal of my own. I like having a pal to take with me on adventures. When we go backpacking he has his separate gear and pack, so he can carry his own food and snacks and carry out his own poop. (Leave no trace, people! Leaving poop in a bag on the trail is not cleaning up!)



**It's amazing how well behaved Buddy seems to be in galleries on your feed. Did you get lucky or did you train him as a pup?**

I knew early on that having a city pup and raising him solo I was going to need to put in the work to get him comfortable in different situations. I do think I got a bit lucky, but I also spent years training and working with him to get where we are now. I think also having committed early on to exposing Buddy to many different situations was really beneficial. I can sense when he is feeling uncomfortable and will do my best to get us to a place where he is comfortable before there's a chance for problems to come up.

**It's a lucky dog who has an artist parent! Is Buddy a studio dog?**

Buddy is a lucky pup! He comes with me to the studio every day. I joke that he knows when I stand facing the "wall" (painting) it's nap time. He's never caused any issues for me in the studio or at home; he has always been good at sticking to his toys and treats and not getting anything that could be a problem.



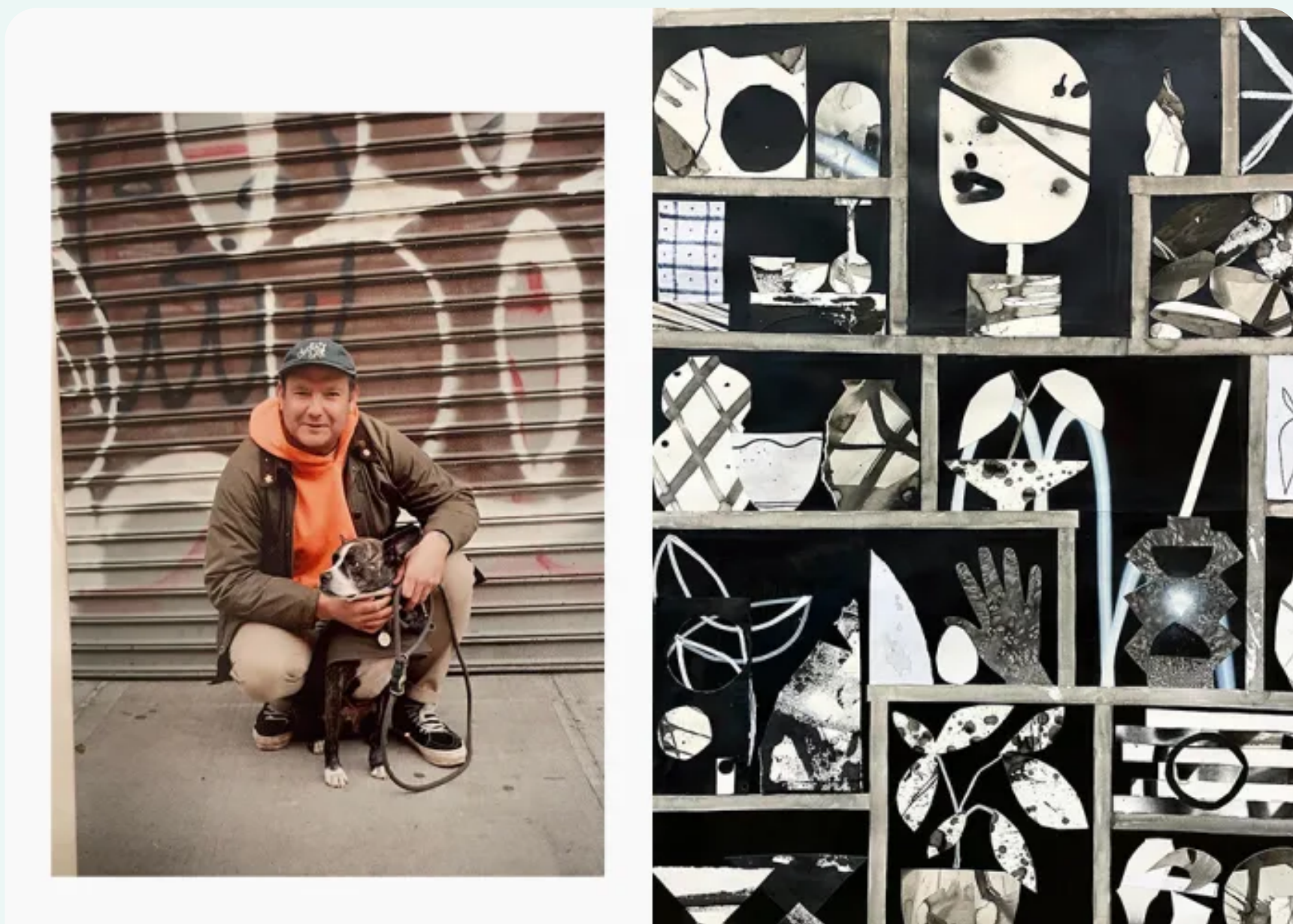
Courtesy of Paul Wackers

**Does Buddy inspire your artwork in any way? Have you ever painted him?**

I do get inspiration from the things around me, and I've put Buddy in my paintings a few times, usually sort of hidden or in a way that he isn't the primary focus. He's normally sleeping when I paint him, which is what he does the second we get to the studio. I have a wall of dog art, many of which I painted of Buddy in various other studios or places we've visited.

**They say people grow to resemble their pets. Do you share any traits or habits with Buddy?**

I'd say the biggest traits I share with Buddy are being handsome and charming. (JK). I think I would need an outside observer to comment on this fairly, so I'll hold off.

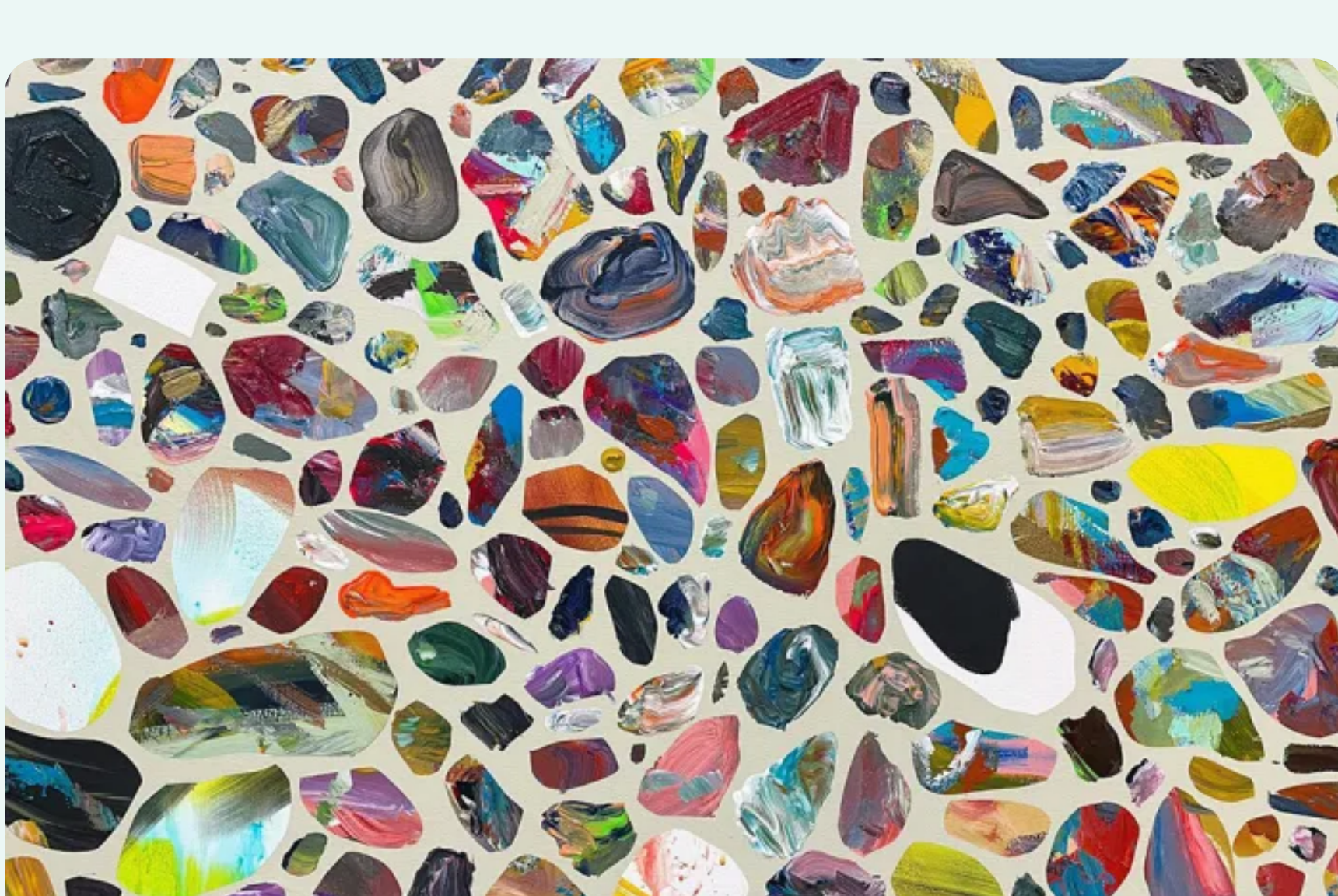


**Pets have been pretty comforting during the pandemic. How did Buddy help get you through?**

Buddy saved me. Working and living alone, having Bud was a godsend. He was the only contact I had for months and was the thing that forced me to get outside when it felt crazy outside. He's very attuned to what's happening around him, so on hard days he would definitely be extra sweet to me. Maybe I'm projecting, but Buddy is a support animal and I know I'm more at ease when he is around.

**Artists are especially tuned to and inspired by what's happening in the world. Have the chaotic past two years influenced your new work, or would you say your style evolves more subconsciously?**

I think changes always show up on a delay. My show at Eleanor Harwood Gallery was very much about space and how we maintain it or collapse it around us. But I think that's been a subject for me for a while now. I'd say having returned from a road trip with Buddy, my current inspirations are the beautiful places, things, and people I saw on our journey.



Courtesy of Paul Wackers

**Last but not least, how has Buddy enriched your life?!**

In too many ways to say. He's my best pal, and I can't imagine life without him.

*Paul Wackers' work can be viewed at the [Jack Hanley Gallery](#) in NYC through August 5, 2022.*

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Cat Kron

Cat Kron is a writer and editor covering art and culture for publications including *Artforum*, *Art Review*, *Cultured*, and *Contemporary Art Review LA*. She has a novelty sweatshirt with an Edward Gorey illustration of a tuxedo cat lying on books and the caption "books, cats, life is good," as well as her own tuxedo named Batty, whom she shares with her husband.

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