

Heather Laws Award (HLA)

"The love one has for their animals is pure and unfettered, portraits are an expression of love capturing their essence is critical to my art."

Heather Laws

Heather passed away in 2021 and her wish was to give back to the community that gave so much to her. She was a unique artist, able to combine her two passions of painting and love of animals to become a successful animal portrait artist. But the road was not always easy. She launched her career at a very early age, painting animals on a Tottenham horse farm. Her animal companions, Maggie, a 3 year old Clydesdale/Thoroughbred and a year old

Labrador/Great Dane cross became her muses. She devoted time developing work for display at local horse shows and art festivals which brought her increasing recognition. Her business grew from these humble beginnings which included marketing pursuits like delivering flyers to homes in Toronto neighbourhoods along with her dog Jess. From there, word spread, as you would expect for such a talented individual, allowing her more studio time, with no door to door canvassing required and technology taking on the lion's share of the business tasks. Her portraits can be found in homes throughout North America and abroad and her work received many regional and national awards. She was also a Signature Member, Director and Exhibitions Coordinator of Pastel Artists.CA

As part of her legacy her family allowed Pastel Artists.CA to raise funds through the sale of her studio contents, including books, cd's, pastels and medium resulting in an endowment to reward exceptional art and support PAC members. It is the intention of the Pastel Artists.CA Directors, to establish a financial prize, The Heather Laws Award, as part of the Annual Online Exhibition to an artist whose submission is deemed by the judges to capture "a pure and unfettered love of animals." This will be launched in 2024 and will consist of a \$200.00 prize awarded over the next ten years. The financial support for membership fees is in keeping with Heather's vision to make art accessible to all and ensure that barriers like costs associated with membership, workshops and supplies are addressed. This will be issued on an as needed basis and at the discretion of the Directors.

Although Heather was extremely talented and successful in her career. She states in *The Commissioned Animal Portrait* article in Gail Sibley's blog, *How to Pastel*, October 2020, "there were many good years working as a full time self-employed artist, but at times other external factors would interrupt my career and take me in other directions." She references everything from economic recessions, a devastating cancer diagnosis, and a two year artist block, all of which took their toll on her confidence. But she persevered, we suspect because family, friends and colleagues gave her what she needed at the time to overcome the obstacles she faced. It's not surprising to those who knew Heather and in spite of the hurdles she faced; she always gave back, donating custom commissioned portraits to many organizations to further their fundraising causes. Thank you, Heather and the Laws family, for this gift of art in your honour. The subject matter must have an animal as the main subject of the painting. More criteria to be provided in the show guidelines sent to members on the launch date.