

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. I'm Nicole Begley. And today we are talking with Mandi Pratt from Grey boy pet portraits about how you can add unique handcrafted products to your lineup. Stay tuned.

Speaker 2 ([00:15](#)):

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. If you're a pet photographer, ready to make more money and start living a life by your design, you've come to the right place. And now your host, pet photographer, travel addict, chocolate martini connoisseur Nicole Begley.

Speaker 1 ([00:34](#)):

Hey everybody. Nicole here from hair of the dog. And today my special guest is Mandi Pratt from grey boy pet portraits in beautiful sunny Southern California. Welcome Mandy. Welcome to the podcast. Thank you. Thanks for having me. Oh, of course. This is my honor. I'm super excited for this conversation. So yeah, so I guess before we even go let the cat out of the bag of what we're talking about, just go ahead and give us your background of, um, you know, when you got started in photography and how you started your business. Sure. So a long time ago, I went to college for graphic design actually, and, um, had a bunch of different art classes and photography was my favorite. So I followed that, you know, degree and did the graphic design and then ended up realizing I love photography way more. So started out doing that and then narrow down into the pet photography and was finding that people were asking me, like clients were asking me after we have a session, you know, is there any way, gosh, I wish I would have done this.

Speaker 1 ([01:33](#)):

Like with my pets that have already passed, is there any way that you can do something special with, you know, photos I have of them? And for so long, I was like, no, sorry. You know, I was kinda picture myself like Photoshopping, like, you know, phone shot or something. And also I should say too, I was trying to figure out a way to stand out in my market. Cause it's pretty saturated down here and also thinking like another stream of revenue. And then my Grammy who's an artist had told me, you know, why don't you come out here and just play she's in Arizona. So come out here and we can have some fun, you can play on my printing press. And so I went out there and she was showing me some different things that she had tried. And then I ended up taking like a couple different workshops with the master printmaker who actually invented these cool, like etching plates.

Speaker 1 ([02:24](#)):

And so I studied under him for a couple years and then, you know, started getting better at it and then experimenting a little bit more and then finally was able to start offering it to my clients. And, um, it was just a cool way to like, you know, take even pictures I had done as well as pictures that they have and make something special. And with these, the etchings on my website, it shows how they're made. Um, you kind of have to like see it to really grasp it, I think, but it's a whole process of etching, a plate from a photo and then, uh, washing the plate and then you like ink it and the ink stays in the grooves of the etching and then you wipe it off and you have to wipe it off just right. And then you like pair it up with dampened, fine art paper. And then I run them together through my grandmother's printing press. And it comes out like feeling kind of like letterpress, you know, dressed in this paper. Um, and each one is different and unique. It depends on like how you ink the plate. And sometimes it takes me a couple of

times to get the image just right. So sometimes you get, you know, happy accidents and sometimes you have to really try it depends on the image. So anyway, yeah. That's how those started. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([03:34](#)):

That's awesome. When, how long ago did you start your business or your interest in photography after after college? When did that start?

Speaker 1 ([03:42](#)):

Let's see. So it was back in like, I think it was Oh eight and then by 2011, I was just offering the pet photography. And then by 2015, the etchings came into play.

Speaker 3 ([03:54](#)):

Nice. And at this point you've basically taken your business from pet photographer to now providing these amazingly unique products for, um, the general market and for other pet photographers, right?

Speaker 1 ([04:08](#)):

Yeah. We developed the wholesale and affiliate program for pet photographers because I had, you know, people ask me about it because it's like a perfect way to pair like a beautiful image with, you know, something that's printed with ink and it's just, you know, cool. And sometimes I end up hand coloring a little bit of them. Like I just did the cutest cutest little Chihuahua that had unfortunately passed, but had this cute picture and had like this red, big red bow. And so, um, I told the client who was gifting it to their friend, you know, is that okay if I just hand cover the bow? Like I think that would make it look so cute. So it kind of made it, you know, pop a little bit and just made it look more adorable. Cause that's honest.

Speaker 3 ([04:52](#)):

That's awesome. Yeah. Well we were just chatting before we got started and you said something that totally just clicked in a way that had not clicked before, you know, and that we have all these beautiful products in my pet photography, business, different wall art, things like that. And you know, there's not really anything you can do when people ask, Oh man, I wish I would have done this for my pets in the past. I wish I could, you know, can you do anything with this, you know, short of, unless you do a lot of digital painting, then yeah. You could take a snapshot and make a beautiful piece of art with it, something like that. But when you mentioned that, I was like, Oh my gosh, you could totally create a little wall gallery of these amazing little, you know, framed at chains. They're beautiful, um, with all of the clients' pets past and present and you know, what an unique, amazing thing to offer. And yeah, I think that's pretty cool. One question though. Yeah. The biggest burning question on my mind, because as a photographer, you know, that we know that light is very important and you know, even with the digital painting, unless

Speaker 1 ([05:58](#)):

You're very skilled, starting with a good image with a good base is, is very helpful.

Speaker 3 ([06:04](#)):

You know, and if you're trying to just edit a photo,

Speaker 1 ([06:06](#)):

I've had clients before that, um, you know, they had a, just to like snapshot and they're like, can you please like, you know, make this look like this one. So it matches for the wall and I'm like, well, yeah, no. Yeah. So if you are taking, you know, a client with a pet, that's still with us and then you showcase show them these and they're like, Oh yeah, that would be great. And they decide to use a snapshot of previous pets that have passed how important the lighting on those images to create something that's cohesive with it. This blows me away with the etchings. I can't even believe it because of the medium they are there. And like it's so it's like, you have to hold one or see one, really get it. But it's like, they're kind of like in perfectly perfect. Right, right.

Speaker 1 ([06:55](#)):

Because they have that kind of like vintage-y feel. And so like you can get little like artifacts, you know, in the background. It's cool. But um, yeah, it's, it's super, super forgiving. Like I get images sometimes off a cell phone that I'm just looking at them going, Oh my goodness, how am I going to make this work with a little bit of sharpening in Photoshop and a little bit of like extra dodging and burning. And I kind of have to make up details sometimes where like the highlights are blown out the stamp tool. So I ended up doing that and then, you know, it comes out and I'm just like, Oh my gosh, this is amazing. Thank God. Ooh. It's just incredible. Like I never would have thought that, you know, in the beginning I thought you had to have like perfect image, you know? And granted, granted when I'm watching a pet photographers image over, you know, somebody that found me on my website and it's over a cell phone shot is much different. Um, but yeah, it's just, they're so forgiving. Just the type of artwork it is, I guess. It's yeah.

Speaker 3 ([08:02](#)):

That's awesome. And then this is just my curious, burning question of the Accion. Are you like hand cheated as it's something that's a digital

Speaker 1 ([08:11](#)):

Digital edge to that how's that work? It's so cool. Cause everything's handmade. So basically, um, somebody will send me the photo and I try to keep all the details. So like when I'm working with a pet photographer, I tell them like, send it to me, like more like in the raw version that you have versus when you put in some extra punch to it, contrast and stuff. Like I'd rather have those mint midtones to work with. So yeah, that, that really helps. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([08:41](#)):

Super cool. Oh, it's just, it's so beautiful. I absolutely love it.

Speaker 1 ([08:46](#)):

Did you get mine? Did you get the little one that I said

Speaker 3 ([08:49](#)):

The little tear, your nose so cute.

Speaker 1 ([08:51](#)):

I love it. It's adorable.

Speaker 3 ([08:56](#)):

So as you know, Mandy, we have tons of pet photographers here on this podcast listening. And we're going to talk a little bit in a second about how they can find other businesses to partner with for special gifts for their clients. But before we get there, I did just want to kind of go over some frequently asked questions that people might have. If they're sounding, they're listening to this and thinking that, Oh my gosh, this might be a really incredible fit to have a new product offering for my business or something they want to explore. And you guys, you have to go to the website, grandpa pet portraits.com and check it out. Cause you have to actually see these things at least virtually, but then in real life, it's a whole nother whole, another ball of wax. They're just gorgeous. So what are some of the questions that you do you tend to get from, from people or what are some things that pet photographers that are thinking about maybe trying to partner with you or are looking into that should know

Speaker 1 ([09:52](#)):

For the again, touch? Right. Well, I have different questions from like just the general population and then pet photographers. But I know, you know, a lot of times when people, even the pet photographers who have created their own, you know, have their own dogs, they said like, gosh, how do I know which one to pick? And so I always tell people, just send me like a few and um, I can suggest which one would make the best etching. Cause it helps me to just kind of look through them and, you know, suggest which one. But, um, yeah, so that's a question. And then the other one I get is can you put, you know, can you add a photo of the two dogs together and yes, of course. And then also I, they even evolved further, like after 2015, when I realized like I had, it was a couple of years after I had said goodbye to my own, um, kitty whose nickname was gray boy with, um, that's who I named the business after.

Speaker 1 ([10:48](#)):

And I was like, wait a minute, you know, if I'm inking these plates, can't I just add like a little bit of Ash to the ink because I w you know, I have like this box and have this thing of, and I just have like, this mix-match things of his, you know, I wanted to get together. And so I figured out, Oh my gosh, you can add just a teeny, tiny bit of Ash in with the ink. So, you know, it's truly like a keepsake. That's amazing. And then I figured out another way, if I didn't want to put it on his porch, on his etching, I could just put it in a little wax seal. So I just put like a little tiny bit and then put the wax seal next to his etching, along with like a lock of his car. And then his little like tag, you know, not dog tag, it's a cap tag, but, right, right.

Speaker 1 ([11:37](#)):

And so I ended up making the little collages like that. So that was cool too. Cause I get questions like, can you, can I do a collage? Yes. So there's examples on my website, but I've done collages where, and I'll make anything seriously, like whatever somebody wants. Um, so one of the ones I just did was a mix between a regular collage. So just two images ex etched right next to each other. And then they wanted the pop prints, you know, of each dog underneath. So that was something new. So that was kind of cool. That was fun to figure out the sizing and all of that. And it turned out cute. They were super cute little dog. So that's another question. So yeah, I do custom, um, you know, whatever somebody wants and then with the pet photographers, it was funny like when I was first getting started, I totally didn't even think of this, but I had like one of my good friends, who's a pet photographer.

Speaker 1 ([12:29](#)):

She wanted to ask me this question, but didn't want to like hurt my feelings. And she was like, she's trying to like, you know, figure out how to ask it nicely. But she was like, if I wanted to offer this

wholesale, like, you know, um, is gray boy gonna be on there? Like, is your branding going to be on there? And I was like, Oh yeah, yeah, I get it. I get it. I was like, no worries. You know? And so we figured out that I would just initial my initials in the corner and it would just be MP and there was no gray boy branding on it, which is totally fine with me. I don't care. And then I would just title it, you know, with usually with the pet's name and number on the left, I number the, the print. So, and there's more, I can talk about that, but you know, somebody's interested in these, you know, talk more about that, but anyway, it was interesting.

Speaker 1 ([13:17](#)):

And so the couple of pet photographers that I work with it through this wholesale, they each have, you know, different things that they want to do or not do, which was fine. And then the ones I should say, the ones that are affiliate. So the difference between the wholesale and affiliates, so wholesale, I'm working with the pet photographer and they're sending me their photo and then I've given it to them for a large amount off. So then they can resell it. However they want to show gray boy branding. So, you know, they can decide whatever they want to price it at. And then with the affiliate, they're not involved with the photo at all. So they're basically just sending me the client and then the client's giving me their photo. And then the pet photographer gets, you know, some affiliate feedback to them. So we're sending the client to me.

Speaker 3 ([14:05](#)):

That's fantastic. Which is a great way when people contact you with, Oh, is there anything I can do with these, you know, all the images that I have, it's just, it's a nice service to them and Oh my gosh, you guys, these are so beautiful. Awesome. Yeah, no, that's great. And that's a good difference between the wholesale and the affiliate affiliate program too, so people can, you know, kind of do what, what works best for them. Take us back, Mandy, maybe towards, you know, when you were still in the pet photographer world and maybe, you know, help give 'em some people that might be in those same shoes, some advice of, of how to even, you know, kind of get started looking for different things or making connections, or just figuring out like they can do to offer some something special for their clients that are in, you know, tough situations. Sure,

Speaker 1 ([14:58](#)):

Sure. Yeah. If they wanted to figure out something special or handmade, you know, to add to their product offering, that would suggest going to Etsy and finding somebody, let's say, if you're in the United States, you could go and find somebody within the U S I do help pet photographers that are outside of the U S it just costs a little bit more for shipping, of course, but you could find somebody off of Etsy or, um, it's fun to go to local, like art walks, of course, you know, during COVID, it's a little bit different, but normally everything is exactly. Normally, um, you could attend one of your local city art walks and do that. Um, or of course you could Google your town and then maybe pet artist or, um, just artist or there's different ways to look around. But yeah,

Speaker 3 ([15:48](#)):

That's awesome. And then making the connection with them. I think some people might get a little nervous of like, Oh gosh, I don't know what the artist's expectations going to be, or if they're going to be willing to work with me. So then they just kind of shut down and this fear of what if, you know, Oh, they're going to say no way. Like I can't, I can't do that. But a lot of times photographers and artists can make these beautiful relationships. So is there, is there any potential pitfall that people need to be

worried about? I am a big believer in like, you know, the worst they can say is they're not interested. They're not going to like, you know,

Speaker 1 ([16:22](#)):

Totally your puppy

Speaker 3 ([16:26](#)):

And, you know, often they're going to be pretty excited about it. Um, because you know, you can set up a, win, win, a win, win situation with them.

Speaker 1 ([16:34](#)):

Yeah. I would just approach them by saying, Hey, you know, notice you're at work wherever and love it, you know? And, and then tell them what you do and ask if they've ever worked with another artist and collaborated, and then just see what they say. Yeah, yeah,

Speaker 3 ([16:49](#)):

Yeah. That's perfect. That's a great way guys, to also, um, touch base with new marketing partners. I know everyone like makes this a giant thing. It really is just, I'm talking to another human, which, you know, maybe it's not face to face and the time of COVID, but can be virtual or from a safe six foot distance with a mess.

Speaker 1 ([17:11](#)):

Crazy. Crazy. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([17:13](#)):

Um, yeah, no, that's fantastic. And yeah, there's so many, so many great things that we can do to think outside of the box. Cause I think a lot of us too, and especially when we're starting out, cause we don't know, you know, and we're just like taking in all this information and we see, okay, I need to do X, Y, and Z. I need to offer X, Y, and Z. I need to do price like this. I need to do this and this. So you're, you're learning all these things. So, you know, that becomes kind of overwhelming and you're focused on that. And then you start to get a little bit more comfortable. And I think there's this whole big world of possibility out there that a lot of people just never really take the time really explore because they just look at, well, this is how, what everybody does.

Speaker 3 ([17:55](#)):

This is just what we do. But gosh, there's just such an untapped reservoir of just amazing new products that can really help you stand out. You know, you don't have to just offer what your lab offers. You can partner with these other people as well. Yeah. Yeah. Fantastic. Send me any, maybe you have some advice for us as well as what we can do to help our clients in the, you know, the sad situations where their pet does pass. Cause unfortunately it happens to all of them and far too soon, but how, you know, how can we make it easier for them or just show that we care? What advice do you,

Speaker 1 ([18:30](#)):

Well, I remember, um, when I was doing the sessions and then you find that out and um, you know, they usually come back to you and say, Oh my gosh, thank you so much. You know, I will even more chair

she's pictures, you know? And then I remember wanting to like send them something special, um, even a card, you know, and especially for clients who have come back to you a couple of times, you know, or spent like a large amount and just invested so much, you know, it's like, you want something a little bit special. And I felt like, you know, I started sending them all like the same sympathy card that you would like see at PetSmart or something. And so I was like, alright, I got creative. So I found this company called dog speak. I think I found them at the Vegas convention.

Speaker 3 ([19:17](#)):

Oh yeah. I have not heard of them. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([19:19](#)):

Yeah. Dog speak OTA, I think is their name. But anyway, they, they sell sympathy cards that they created. So, um, they wrote the words and stuff, so they're unique. So I find them and then I was able to order like a stack of them. So I have them on hand and I would use those. But then I also found some brochures through, um, Sarah with joy session. And, um, they, she worked with a grief counselor and created those. And so, um, I bought some of those from her, um, to hand out and stuff in with the, with the card. And, and then also with the etchings, I figured out, you know, I wanted to have like a more affordable option for people who didn't want like a custom etching, but wanted, um, just like something quick to just, you know, my friend just lost their children.

Speaker 1 ([20:14](#)):

Like what can I just send her? You know, that's something quick and just, I'm thinking of you. So I thought it would be fun to make like the little muzzles of, you know, the little nose and mouth of, um, the different breeds. So I started with, I think it was like a Frenchie and then it goes in, and then now I've made like, I don't know, 20 of different breeds or something. And then I have a kitty and they're just little like five by five. And that's what I sent you through your nose. And then, um, and then I to like hobby lobby and found these tiny little like table easels that I can set them on. Um, and then I didn't even, they have like the cutest little five by five brains too. So I figured that out. So anyway, just thought those are perfect for gifts.

Speaker 1 ([21:01](#)):

So when I have, you know, pet photography, clients who I know are grieving, it's just like a little something special, you know, to send out for my favorites or, you know, my regular. So yeah, I started doing those and, um, it was fun though. And I'm going to keep making, you know, uh, different breeds is the need comes up. But, um, I think the last batch was we did a pitty and a boxer and the sheets too. So those were fun. So yeah, those, um, and actually those are really good, um, samples. So I was going to say too, if anybody was interested in like seeing what an etching is like for real, um, I'm happy to just give them with a little mini etching so they can tell me which one they want and I'll ship it to them. And as long as they're in the U S I'll just get it for free.

Speaker 3 ([21:50](#)):

Yeah. Nice, nice. That's very nice. Yeah, they are really just, yeah, they're really unique. I'm truly, I've never seen anything like them. They're really cool. Um, yeah, I'm excited. I'm I'm my wheels are turning. It might be, might be a new product for me. I love it. I love it. Um, gosh, Mandy, this has been so good. Um, thanks so much for taking the time and sharing your journey and sharing your, you know, unique talent of, you know, what you've created. It's pretty special. Yeah. I love it. I love it. And I think a lot of

our listeners are gonna love it too. So you mentioned Sarah from joy session and that's, um, Sarah Earnhardt or Sarah Beth photography. Uh, she has, um, she's been well known for joy sessions, which was like the end of life sessions, one of the first pet photographers in the industry to really, you know, really market those sessions and just really that's, that's her passion. That's where she feels, um, you know, called to, to give back to the pet world. So she created a joy session network. And Sarah, if you're listening, I'm going to be emailing you right now. Um, just cause I need to get you on the podcast too. So you could talk more about that, but Mandy, I know you've worked a little bit with her. Can you tell everyone just a little bit about voice session network or some of the other, um, you know, things that they have to help?

Speaker 1 ([23:11](#)):

Yeah. Um, so she had created this excellent brochure with her friend who is a grief counselor and, um, she created this brochure that helps, um, you know, grieving pet parents, you know, know how to get through the different stages and what can you do to help yourself? And people have found it like super, super helpful. So, um, I like to always include that when I send out any sympathy card and then, um, there's another thing she was working on too. I hope she does not mind me. It was, she had made like a one page PDF ways to memorialize a pet in his past and she had the etchings on there, but she had a lot of other cool things too, like an artist that uses the ashes to make like pet jewelry and stuff. Yeah. So it was really cool. So sometimes I will include that as well.

Speaker 1 ([24:04](#)):

Um, so people know, you know, there's other things too that they might be interested in, not just the etchings. Um, so I found that was, that was helpful too, then people appreciate it. That, yeah, no, that's a, that's a great resource. Thanks for sharing. And yes, we'll get Sarah on the podcast soon. Cool. Um, go ahead and let us know where, where people can find you. Sure. So the website is gray boy with the E T R E Y B O Y and then pet portraits.com. And then they can just contact me through the contact link on there. Perfect. I just want them to say, don't be afraid to ask me any questions like that photographer was afraid to ask, you know, can, can we skip the gray boy branding if I'm going to be wholesaling. Right, right, right. Yeah. There are no silly questions. So it doesn't hurt to ask. Yeah. Awesome. Well again, thank you Mandy. It's so great to chat with you and you guys definitely go check these out. They're absolutely beautiful. And um, you should probably all get one for your own dog. I'm thinking too. And cat and horse. Do you do horses? Yes, I do. Okay. All right. I might have to have a whole little gallery in my office.

Speaker 1 ([25:11](#)):

That'd be perfect. Awesome. Thank you again, Mandy. Um, yeah, we'll talk to you soon.

Speaker 3 ([25:15](#)):

Hey, pet photographers. Are you struggling to bring your vision to life? Do you long for creating a style that is true to you? Are you ready to leave the fads and trends behind and learn how to create a style that is uniquely yours so that your work can stand apart here at hair of the dog, we are hosting a free five day unleash your style challenge to help you do just that registration is open now. So go to [www dot Harris, the dog academy.com](http://www.dogacademy.com) forward slash unleash to save your seat. We can't wait to see what you create.