



# WEB JOURNAL

*of the Worldwide Association of  
Bracco italiano Amateur Clubs*

October 2018

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## WHEN BEAUTY BECOMES A PROBLEM

by Cesare Bonasegale

*Morphological beauty and conventional beauty.*

*How to maintain the functional breed characteristics even if the dog is not used as a hunter.*

The Italian translation of this article is published  
in the Giornale del Bracco italiano

For thorough bred dogs, beauty means to have the morphological characteristics foreseen by the breed's standard. Thus it is beautiful also a dog very strange proportions like the Basset, with the squashed nose and bulging eyes like the Bulldog, or with a cold and aggressive look like a Doberman, that is with characteristics which are typical of the breed but far from the beauty concept.

However there is also a conventional type of beauty which doesn't follow the morphological standard of the relevant breeds, and which is based on the harmony of the features, on the warm colours, on the sweetness of the expression, on the elegance of the movement. And it is a type of beauty which is like the human beauty, which also varies with time, according to our evolution: the beauty of the women painted by the renaissance artists is very different from that of the girls we consider beautiful today.

The girls participating to the Miss Italy contest walk in front of the jury to show their gracefulness... just like dogs do when competing for the Best in Show, where the judge must establish if it is more beautiful a gigantic Great Dane or a pretty Basset Hound. How can one make such a

comparison? Each one is beautiful according to the morphological criteria of its breed... and in fact the winner often is the one which walks more elegantly. Exactly as for the girls in the beauty contests.

The two types of beauty, however, do not necessarily exclude each other and in certain breeds can coexist, thus creating dogs morphologically correct and conventionally very beautiful.

A problem may at times exist with working breeds such as, for instance, pointing dogs. It may happen that people is fascinated by their conventional beauty and take these dogs as pets, thus neglecting their working qualities which with time will inevitably deteriorate. This is the case of the Bracco Italiano, especially abroad (where the breed doesn't have a long hunting tradition) and has happened to the Irish Setter, to the Weimaraner and to the Cocker Spaniel. Things like that do not happen instead to the German Shorthaired Pointer, or to the German Drahthaar or to the English Pointer, for which beauty is only morphological and consequently very seldom become pet dogs.

For the Bracco Italiano, however, neglecting its haunting attitude means forgetting the reasons for which the breed has been created: Bracco Ita-

liano exists thanks to its hunting ability and for the way it works, not for its beauty. Therefore a Bracco Italiano which is unable to work is only an imitation of the Bracco Italiano, it is not a true Bracco Italiano.

To solve this type of problems, one could consider the possibility of creating a new sport which simulates hunting and which can be practiced also by non hunters and by those who do not have a gun.

The inspiration comes from the Italian PAV tests (Prove di Attitudine Venatoria) originally created for those hunters who do not want to participate with their dogs to the official field trials and which are meant to verify the hunting attitude of their dogs.

These trials (which in English could be called HAT: Hunting Attitude Test) should certify the dog's natural hunting attitude, i.e. searching ability, pointing, no fear to gun shot, retrieving and which should possibly certify the natural gate characteristics.

The positive result of the HAT should be necessary to be included in the Selected Breeding Book, which hopefully all national kennel clubs should set up.