

Barkology: The Essence of Dog

By Josh Hagy



Zoë Lancaster, the creative mind behind Barkology with her newest designs.

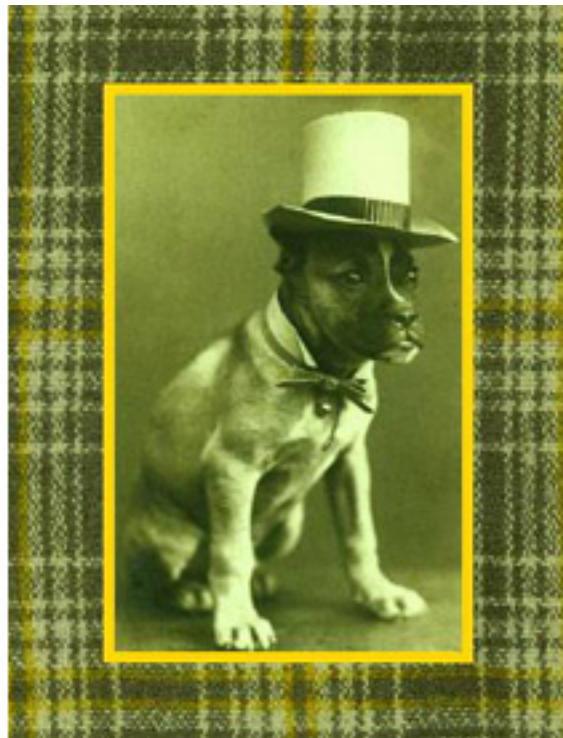
Take one dog lover. Add in a healthy dose of graphic art design skills, throw in a pinch of creativity and what do you get?

Barkology. An Atlanta, Georgia based company founded by Zoë Lancaster, the creative genius behind an entire line of products for dog lovers. “What makes Barkology so charming is it is about the essence of dog,” said Zoë.

Founded in 2004 as a division of Skema, Zoë’s textile and graphic design business, Barkology has quickly become a success in the world of novelty gifts

and attire. While the products are geared toward humans rather than man's best friend, Zo stumbled across something surprising at a flea market that sent her creative juices flowing and bent her thoughts toward creating something for dog lovers around the world.

It was a simple photograph of a pit bull that would change the direction of her work. "After many years of designing textiles and graphics with business partner, Susie Quillin, we decided it was time for a change," explains Zo on her company's Web site, www.barkology.com. "The idea for Barkology came to light while rummaging through boxes at a flea market. A Victorian studio portrait of a dapper pit bull became inspiration for the first set of Barkology note cards."



The Victorian studio portrait that sparked the birth of Barkology.

From that humble beginning, Barkology became an instant success. Barkology now sports an entire line of products, ranging from note cards to hats, shirts and home accessories. These items, which are designed by Zo, have become a success, so much so that Zo finds herself running to keep up with the demand. "I always seem to have more ideas than I have time to execute them," she said.

“Because Barkology is wholesale only, my products are introduced twice a year at the two Atlanta and two New York Gift Shows. That requires working at least six months to a year in advance when planning the line and getting samples ready for the show.” It’s a schedule that keeps Zo and her Barkology staff hopping.



Just one of the many creative Barkology note cards.

That schedule makes for a hectic pace, especially during the holiday season, which Zo calls her “busiest time of the year” but, Barkology is a labor of love for her. “Barkology continues to be, first and foremost, homage to dogs, dedicated to Atlas, DaisyBean and Dot, my kids and devoted coworkers. It's such a treat to come to work every day to do a job I love with the added bonus of featuring my muse, the dog and a portion of profits benefits my favorite canine charities.” Those charities include The Atlanta Humane Society, Canine Assistants, Greyhound Adoption, Pets Are Loving Support and Southeastern Guide Dogs.



Dogs have long been a big part of Zoë's life, as seen here in this photo of a two-year-old Zoë.

Between show debuts, Barkology has also gathered a great deal of national attention. In October, Barkology exhibited again at the H.H. Backer 40th Christmas Pet Industry Trade Show, where, among the best sellers were three new Barkology introductions: the pink vintage thermal with Coat of Arms print in chocolate, the Rose cap with Bark Bite motif and the snappy black Grrr cap.

Barkology products are not intended for use by canines, but never stray from Zoë's "beloved muse." "Barkology's goods are handsome and a bit quirky," she explains on the Web site. And even with the success of Barkology, Zoë finds herself working at other projects as well. "While I don't make products designed for dogs, as a designer I still take on contract work. I'm currently working on a line of doggy things for another vendor, which has been great fun."



Zoë models some of Barkology's sleepwear.

The fine arts are no stranger to Zoë, who boasts college degrees in two different disciplines. “I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Printing and Dyeing from the Memphis Academy of Arts in Tennessee and a Master of Fine Arts from Syracuse University, New York, in Surface Design,” said Zoë, who has also spent time behind the lectern. “I taught and directed the Surface Design program in the School of Art and Design at Georgia State University in Atlanta for 15 years before starting my design business.”

Zoë’s grounding in the fine arts has had a definite and beneficial impact on her work at Barkology. “Barkology’s goods are handsome, yet a bit quirky, with a dash of wit. They never stray far from our beloved muse, the dog,” she said. Staying with one “muse,” however, leaves Zoë with something of a dilemma.

With every new design comes the challenge of developing fresh new ideas. Since dogs have been part of the nearly every person’s life for countless years, the task of finding something new to say is not an easy one. “It’s really hard to come up with anything new or profound about dogs that all dog lovers don’t already know,” she said. “To me, a house is not a home without a dog (or two or three...). The most used room in my house is hung wall-to-wall with dog art and there is always a dog in residence on each of the most comfortable pieces of furniture.”



Atlas, one of Zoë's beloved pets, finds a comfortable seat on the furniture.

Zoë believes that a dog can be an extraordinarily important part of any person's life and fill a variety of different roles, so many, in fact, that it is no wonder Zoë's muse comes to her in the form of a dog. "For roughly 10,000 years the dog has been prevalent in art, literature, legend, and popular culture. How could this wonderful animal not capture one's heart? They are highly intelligent, intuitive, hard workers when given a job (and sometimes when not given a job); loving companions, protectors, comedians, athletes, comforters... the list is endless."

And so, too, is Zoë's creativity.

All Labs is proud to carry some of Barkology's [Apparel](#) and [Notecards](#). Check out our [store](#) to find these fun and functional items.