



### PET HEALTH

# Designer Dogs

*By Melanie D.G. Kaplan*

After 11 years with his black miniature poodle Tina Turner, fashion designer Zac Posen doesn't hear much about resembling his dog. By now, he says, it's simply stating the obvious. As usual, his House of Z juggles numerous projects. In 2014, he launched new eyewear and fine jewelry collections and a wedding collection at David's Bridal. He was also named creative director for Brooks Brothers' signature women's collection. Posen is especially excited about returning as a judge on *Lifetime's Project Runway*, which he says now has a "whole different caliber of taste and talent." He and his partner, House of Z creative director Christopher Niquet, and their three handbag-sized dogs live in New York City.



● **Your dogs are Tina Turner, Betty Blue, and Candy Darling. What's behind the names?**

Tina Turner—I'm a big fan. And this miniature poodle has very long legs and likes to dance. Christopher had Betty Blue, a dapple miniature long-haired dachshund, named after the movie character. She's more shy, but she's been photographed by all the great photographers. Christopher worked with Karl Lagerfeld for a few years, and Lagerfeld really fell in love with animals through Betty. He named her the Linda Evangelista of dogs. And Candy Darling, an English cream miniature dachshund, is the blond baby that we adopted. Not to be cliché.

**What is your home life like with Christopher and the three "kids"?**

All of the dogs except Betty Blue were meant to be uptown dogs. They love walking down Sutton Place and seeing all the other fancy dogs. Tina at moments is eerily humanistic—watching TV, watching me cook. Sometimes I have to give them chomps of carrots when I'm cooking. It's hard to resist having these three dogs in bed, but they don't sleep with us. They have their own little bed on my side. Tina is a superstar poodle-gymnast, and they all curl into one big dog ball together. They're pretty patient until we're up and dressed and ready to walk them.

**What is mealtime like?**

I feed them twice a day. You don't want to overfeed them, so you need to be very disciplined because they will eat until they pop. People will make comments—maybe the dogs look too skinny. But our vet said they are the dream weight. And I said, "Well, they work in fashion and they're supermodels." They have a naughty side with food. Betty has an affinity for caviar. You can't really put fish roe caviar or herring on a table. Other than that, they're very well behaved.

**Where do you stand on dogs and clothing?**

I don't go there. My dogs would like it too much, and I don't have room



for their closet. The dachshunds have quilted jackets in the winter, and Tina wears a red hand-knitted cashmere sweater. The only color you can put on a black miniature poodle is red—that's a rule. But that's it.

***Have you thought about a fashion show with dogs?***

I have, and it's really hard. Animals, children, and lasers/headpieces become distracting from the clothing. With our clothing, there's a real craft

***You have a new office. Does it have space for the dogs?***

Not right now. But instead of being down in Tribeca, now I can walk to work, so I can go home and walk them.

***What do the girls think about your being so busy?***

I think they'd like more vacation. Pretty soon they're going to have to get into the mindset for me having real children, when that happens in the future. They're going to be extremely protective. Tina's going to be crouched near the baby and growling at anyone who comes near it. Three dogs is a lot. It can get overwhelming at times. It takes a lot of responsibility and is a full commitment for a long period of time. But these dogs have been with me as I've built my company. They truly are my best friends.

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***Are your city dogs upset when you take them into the country?***

No. Tina loves it. Candy loves it because she's a girl from the South. Betty loves it, but she's more of a beach girl. They go in their custom Zac Posen dog carriers—that we used to make—to travel to Harbour Island in the Bahamas. They have to get special visas. They love the beach and sunbathing more than anything in the world.

and skill that goes into them, and that should be the focus.

It almost would be silly or insulting to the people who make the clothing and the people that watch it to have it on animals. If you're looking at a fashion show that's about integrity of design, you don't want a cute shih tzu or poodle stealing the attention. But I have brought them on the *Project Runway* set.

Reviewed by **Will Draper, DVM**  
WebMD Pet Health Expert

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