Cats Star In and Benefit From NYC Art Show

BY PAT SUMMERS
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Some people might go for the art – after all, it is an art show. Others might go for the cats and kittens up for adoption on Fridays and Saturdays. Luckiest of all are those who look at the art and leave with a cat. Or two of them.

This happened last weekend at White Columns Gallery, Manhattan, where “The Cat Show” runs daily except Monday through Saturday, July 27. After carefully looking around, a young woman took two young tabbies home with her. Other people were “cat-ivated” by the felines cavorting in the cat habitat, centerpiece of the main gallery room.

A giant walk-in cage with chicken wire “walls,” stocked with toys and furniture for a dozen or so cats, all parts of the habitat were made by artists – as were the paintings, assemblages and collages, photographs, sculptures, ceramics and videos throughout the gallery. It’s easy to spend hours there.

The show was curated by Rhonda Lieberman, in partnership with Social Tees Animal Rescue, a non-profit, no-kill animal shelter in Manhattan, whose adoptable felines are the “Cats-in-Residence.” Its purpose: celebrating cats and raising awareness about homeless pets in the city. Filling all the gallery rooms, the artworks represent an amazing diversity. A large portrait photo shows “Two British Shorthair Cats,” one gray, one greige and both with burning amber eyes. One video captures cats playing piano (well, sort of), while another shows a cat lapping from a bowl -- endlessly.

A one-minute film loop shows only one thing: a black cat tail, moving up, moving down, twitching and curling, nearly dancing. A 1989 home movie by Gus van Sant records his cat, “Junior,” following the bouncing light reflections as he played his guitar. Four shelves and a floor display share an artist’s “personal ceramic cat collection.”

A watercolor painting titled “Duet” shows one cat playing a flute white a second cat holds a triangle at the ready. Ceramic pots feature cat faces, and vinyl letters saying “catty corner” are affixed in a wall corner (of course). “I am I because my little cat knows me,” proclaims a gouache screenprint on paper. Seven watercolors in a row capture a cat’s moves and gestures.
Many of the “cat-alytic” works on view are ambiguous, at best, and the total absence of wall signs doesn’t help. But it’s a fun show for a great cause, so no one’s complaining.

What more could you want? Tee shirts, you say? How about a black one that says “Stray Pride,” or a white one, with “I (heart) Animal Rescue”? For a $20 donation, either tee is yours – and you’ll be helping Social Tees. (http://socialteesnyc.org)

“The Cat Show” continues through Saturday, July 27 at White Columns, 320 West 13 Street (enter on Horatio St.); whitecolumns.org; Tel: (212) 924-4212; Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 12-6 pm. There will be on-site adoptions July 19-20.

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Freelance writer Pat Summers also blogs at NJ.com/pets.