Meow Mix: "The Cat Show" Opens At White Columns

By Ali Pechman

Cat portraiture, holographic cats, and live kittens up for adoption mingled together at the opening of “The Cat Show” at White Columns. The show, organized in partnership with Social Tees Animal Rescue, brings together the work of 50 artists in a dizzying display of cat devotion. Curator Rhonda Lieberman proudly claims in the “zine” catalogue, “If you love one cat, how can you not love them all? This was my awakening as a cat lady.” For all the cat-themed memes and videos saturating Internet culture, she writes, there could be more in the way of actual care for the kitties, hence a show about all things cat.

Silly and irreverent at times, “The Cat Show” includes everything from a Cory Arcangel video of cats playing the piano to a bust hanging over the entryway wearing a knit sweater: I [Heart] My Feral Cat. Some are sexy cats (Richard Prince’s “Adults Only” book cover illustration, or Marilyn Minter’s Cat’s Eye); some are sweet (Laura Owen’s and Elizabeth Peyton’s paintings); and some are more impressionistic (Mark Leckey’s animation Flix, of a black cartoon cat tail wagging on endless loop).
Most popular for iPhone photo-snapping were Antoine Catala’s hologram (in which a cartoon cat head spins over a porcelain body), a shrine of cat katchkes, and of course, the kittens up for adoption, particularly some tiny black and gray cats who couldn’t stop pawing at each other. (“Those two have to go together, that’s the rule,” a man said.) The 10 cats make up “The Cats-in-Residence Program”—actually rescue cats ready to be taken home—but renamed monikers such as Jaspurr Johns, Bruce Meowman, Claws Oldenburg, and, well, Alex Katz.

The hilarious catalogue, too, is a real treat. Stapled together and printed on standard copy paper, it’s a DIY fanzine for felines, complete with collages and top-ten lists. With an intro by Lieberman on her descent into cat-dom (Of James Turrell’s Meeting at PS1, Lieberman writes, “This piece could only be improved by a cat”), it also includes essays like “Ode to Cat Ladies” or Amy Taubin’s “Cats Who Have Lived with Me.”

Despite the heavy rain, the opening drew a sizable, albeit damp, crowd. And in a fitting twist, when the rain turned into a downpour, it was the humans who didn’t want to get wet.