'The Cat Show' at White Columns

by Mia Kim

*OC culture contributor MIA KIM reports on the latest permutation of the cat phenomenon.*

Cats! Love them or hate them, there’s no denying their rise to world domination. Seriously, what other animal has such relevance and influence on popular culture today? That being said, the feline has long been a friend and muse to many artists—Dali, Kandinsky, O’Keefe. They all realized their power. Possessing such adorably expressive faces and peculiar personalities, cats make the perfect subjects for any work of art.

Curated by artist, writer, and self-confessed cat lady Rhonda Lieberman, *The Cat Show* at White Columns gallery is a collection of paintings, collages, photographs, videos, and ceramics by over 50 different artists, including Andy Warhol, RITA ACKERMANN, Nobuyoshi Araki, and BARBARA KRUGER. The theme, of course, is what the title suggests (cats), with varying depictions of the curious creature in all its glory.

The gallery space is a visual overdose. Art is arranged on the walls, suspended from the ceiling, propped in corners and covering the floor—kitties everywhere! Mark Leckey’s animated *Flix* is a minute-long study on the cat tail and its captivating movement. Dave Muller's googly-eyed watercolor and John
Hiltunen’s kitten-head collages are among the many pieces that lend a healthy dose of feline humor. Another must-see is the comprehensive ceramic collection of music journalist T. Cole Rachel, a mini exhibit in itself.

The literal centerpiece of the show is Freecell and Gia Wolff’s *Cat Habitat Construction*, a "pussy playground" built from PVC piping wrapped in rope. Organized in partnership with the East Village Social Tees Animal Rescue, the "cats-in-residence program" features a handful of wide-eyed kittens roving around the architectural jungle gym, all irresistible and each looking for a new home. Lieberman was inspired by her own cat-rescue efforts and wanted to create an inviting environment where "people could hang out and fall in love with strays." An art show meets animal adoption agency? Genius. While most of the work is courtesy of and not for sale, black-and-white zines and Olaf Breuning-designed buttons are available for purchase, with proceeds going to Social Tees.

You don’t have to be a crazy cat lady or gent to realize the beauty of this show. It’s either the perfect remedy for a rough day or it will make your smile even wider on a good one. It’s warm and fuzzy, and also a little funny, just like a cat.


**WHITE COLUMNS**
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