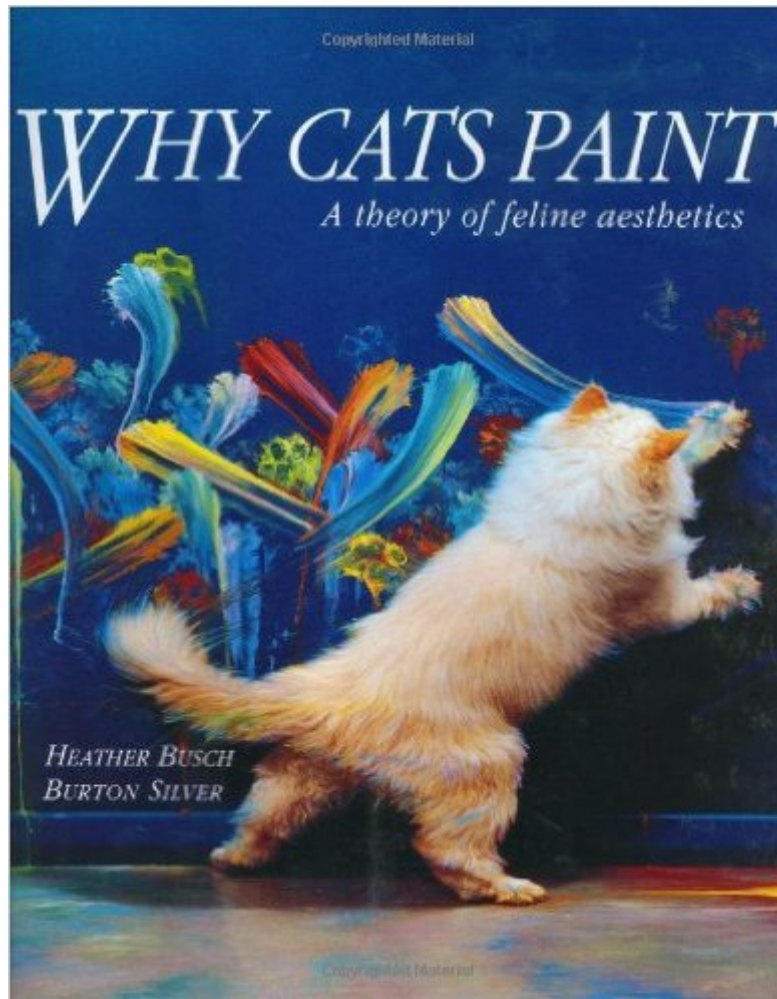


The book was found

Why Cats Paint: A Theory Of Feline Aesthetics



Synopsis

An unprecedented photographic record of cat creativity that will intrigue cat lovers and art lovers alike.

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press (May 1, 1994)

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Customer Reviews

Several theories of feline art have been put forward over the years, and this volume may serve as an excellent introduction to the uninitiated. Influential feline artists are discussed and their work reprinted in glorious detail. There is, however, a strong bias towards the mainstream of cat art. Important, indeed vital, underground movements are completely ignored. The street art of alley cats is sadly overlooked, perhaps reflecting the authors deference to the curators of that ivory tower, the Museum of Non Primate Art. Also lacking is any serious discussion of Queer Theory, so vital in the deconstruction of any mammalian artistic representations. Yet in spite of these flaws, *Why Cats Paint* remains an important and influential volume that no connoisseur of feline aesthetics can afford to ignore.

My undergraduate work was in Fine Arts and Art History so I found this book hysterical. The writing style mimics most art criticism and art history pieces, so if you're familiar with that genre, you'll appreciate the genius of this book. It pokes fun at art criticism while playing on most people's bafflement as to what constitutes art. This book is a joke, although it's so flawlessly constructed you can't be sure at first. The cat metaphor makes a great commentary on the ridiculousness of much

art writing. Even if you've never been forced to read ridiculous art criticism, you'll appreciate this book if you love cats. This review is in memory of "Teenie" (1992-2000), my little calico girl.

The first time I saw this book, I thought it was such a riot that I couldn't stop laughing. But then, as the pages progressed, a small thought crept over me -- 'could this be serious?' I am a person owned by cats - if one includes the kittens, I've had 19 cats officially (and another half-dozen stray hangers-on who know that food will be forthcoming). It had never occurred to me to give them paint! What would happen if I did? The photography in the book is impressive. Working with children or animals in the best of settings is never easy for a photographer, but Heather Busch is to be commended for bravery, patience, and creativity that obviously rivals the cat-subjects of the text. Stunning colour shows not only the cats' creations, but the cats themselves, often matching their artistic styles in body as well as spirit (for example, Rusty, the orange tabby, likes to paint in a rustic manner; Wong and Lulu collaborate on interesting abstractions, etc.). The text is written with ironic skill and creative flair by Burton Silver (cats may paint, but have yet to write...). Silver (the name of one of my cats, by the way) is a writer and art critic based in New Zealand, having written on subjects such as contemporary erotic Japanese paper sculpture. In addition to going through a contemporary survey, the authors look at the history of cat art (including a Xois funerary discovery, ancient Egyptian art, medieval illuminations, and more). It also looks at the psychology of why cats paint (hence the title) -- the fascinating theory of Invertism is a case in point, which explains why cats lie on their heads looking at objects upside down approximately 3% of the day. A funny book. A fascinating book. A beautiful book. My cats each give it paws up!

As a non-primate artist, I find myself struggling for credibility within a homo sapien-dominant society. My exclusion from this book infuriates me; I have been painting with my paws for 10 years, and *not* with the anthropomorphic media the majority of the other cats use. Mine is a non-traditional approach steeped in the ancient rituals of animism which predate the appearance of you narrow-minded, talking monkeys -- I swat at the flies which hover above my half-buried faecal matter, smearing my own personal excreta upon the surrounding vertical surfaces. I not only proclaim my dominance and territory this way, but I express the integration of necessity and ensoulment. I am truly disheartened that I, a simple, "homeless" alley cat be discriminated against inclusion in this publication because I do not fit the privileged, domesticated, bourgeois ideal. I refuse to wear a collar, and I beg freely at back alley kitchen exits. None of you talking monkeys will ever claim me as a "pet," nor will I conform to your elitist dogma. I find your art criticism trite and

superficial, a paeon to the Ivory Tower of academia -- completely detached from what it means to be feline, to teeter on the edge of survival. May all my shed fur cling to your formalwear. Lucius "Scruffy" Lickpaws San Diego [...]

Come on people, it's not really an art book. It's tongue-in-cheek fun for cat lovers. Evidence: check out Bootsie, the trans-expressionist on Pg. 72, Angel undergoing bovine hypnosis on pg. 85, and many more examples. If you still believe there is significant evidence of representational invertism in feline territorial demarcation activity, please take it up with Charlie, the Peripheral Realist; Ginger the Neo-Synthesist or Princess the Elemental Fragmentist. I'm too busy admiring Tiger, the Spontaneous Reductionist.

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