

ART IN REVIEW

‘The Cat Show’

By ROBERTA SMITH

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*White Columns
320 West 13th Street, West Village
Through July 27*

Some of us can't get enough of those eternally elegant and enigmatic creatures called cats, not even the writer and artist Rhonda Lieberman, who identifies herself as a dog lover. To scratch her itch, she organized "The Cat Show," which presents feline-themed art in just about every known medium by about 100 artists. The centerpiece is a walk-in cage outfitted with numerous cat-friendly sculptures for playing, sleeping and hiding, by Ruth Root, Lucky DeBellevue, Jonathan Horowitz, Ryan McNamara and Joe Scanlan, as well as an extra-large litter box by Rob Pruitt. Every Friday and Saturday the cage is occupied by as many as a dozen tempting companions available for adoption from the Social Tees Animal Rescue, which worked with Ms. Lieberman on the show.

Some pieces are departures from an artist's characteristic efforts, like "The Last Photograph I Took of Crow," a large photograph of a black cat of advanced age, by Eileen Quinlan, who is known for far more abstract camera work. The same might be said for the efforts of Michele Abeles, Jordan Wolfson and the film director Gus Van Sant, who in 1989 videotaped his cat chasing the light reflected off his guitar as he played it. The writer T. Cole Rachel is showing all or part of his "personal ceramic cat collection." Either way, it's a study in obsession.

Cat references in character with an artist's usual work include a wonderful drawing of a tabby by Andy Warhol from his commercial-art years and Cory Arcangel's sampling of found sound derived from sampled videos of piano-playing cats.

There are cat portraits from Eric Ginsburg, a painter of dogs who may be even better on the other side of the aisle; entrancingly dense cat collages from Siobhan Meow; and cat abstractions from Jake Ewert in soot on wide-wale corduroy.

The program of 16 short videos is terrific, especially Seth Miller's "Talking Cats Play Pattycake," Billy Browne's "Rufus Tower" and "I am Maru 4," featuring the incomparable Maru of Internet fame. A cat from Japan who has never met a cardboard box he couldn't wedge himself into, he is recorded for posterity by his devoted owner and videographer, Mugumogu. Maru is nearly a dead ringer for a cat who brightened my life for 16 years. I miss you, Alice. Thank you, Ms. Lieberman.

Correction: July 17, 2013

An art review on July 5 about "The Cat Show," at the White Columns gallery in Manhattan, referred incorrectly to a writer who has part of a "personal ceramic cat collection" on display. The writer, T. Cole Rachel, is a man.