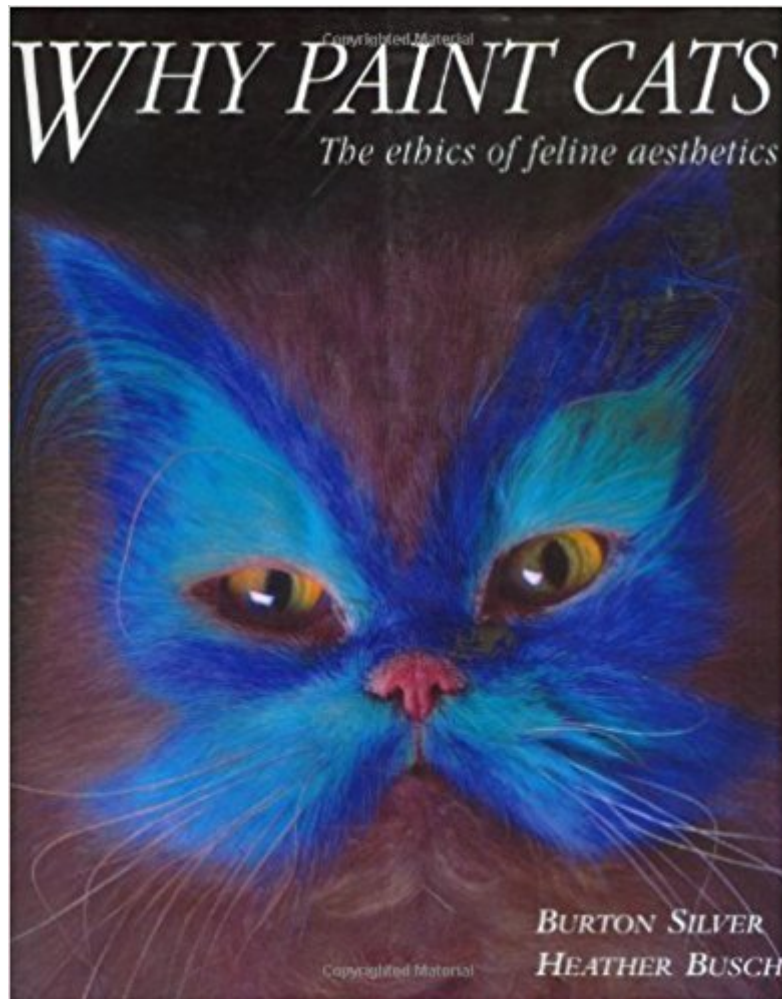


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# Why Paint Cats: The Ethics Of Feline Aesthetics



## Synopsis

Why did a woman in California pay an artist \$5,000 to paint her cat to look like a pig? What made a New York stockbroker spend even more than that to have the image of Charlie Chaplin painted on his cat's posterior? *WHY PAINT CATS* reveals that, far from being an amusement for the idle rich, this seemingly aberrant behavior is part of a new art movement that claims to promote a better understanding of the cats in our lives. Following the international success of their previous collaboration of feline aesthetics, *WHY CATS PAINT*, Burton Silver and Heather Busch turn their scholarly attention to the cat as canvas. The authors detail all the latest trends in the movement, including the highly controversial Retromingent Expressionism, drawing conclusions that will provoke and amuse, startle, and enlighten. Exhaustively researched and lavishly illustrated, this insightful and engaging book raises important ethical questions and explores the rights of pet owners to reinvent their cats in the name of art.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I made the mistake of reading this book out on my deck, and I laughed out loud so often that the neighbors probably thought I finally lost it. As with the best humor, the book is done with an absolutely straight face (well, except for the goofy portraits of the "artists" which begin each chapter). So straight, in fact, that I've seen at least two columnists who were taken in by it and reviewed it as a serious work. The level of detail is amazing: not just in the cat photos (which are wonderful) but in footnotes ("Stace, P. Feline Kinetic Design as Installation ARt, 1999-2001 Journal of Applied Animal Aesthetics, Vol. VII, 2001), captions (a Santa-painted cat: "...she makes us

painfully aware of the continuing unhealthy santization of winter solstice symbolism with its stupefying illusion of male as dominant gift giver"). "Why Paint Cats" works on a lot of levels - as a skewering of art criticism, a gentle poke at cat lovers and Animal Rights activists, and best of all, as good, silly fun.

This is one of the most entertaining art books I've seen. The text is well-written enough to fool most people, and the only way I knew it was a spoof was I've read my share of art criticism and art history, even though I'm a biologist by training, and I think I can detect when someone is making fun of the whole business. Having figured out the text was a joke, it was only a hop, skip, and a jump to figuring out the cat paintings were probably fake and probably done on a computer. I'm not positive about this, since they look so realistic, but it seems likely. Also, it seems unlikely that any cat would sit still long enough to have such elaborate paintings done. Furthermore, if that wasn't enough, the author states that some of the paintings were by well-known artists that cost as much as \$7000 each--not very likely. (Also I've never heard of any of these artists). Whether they're real or fake, the cat paintings are truly spectacular and are entertaining just by themselves. I note that a veterinarian in a previous review of this book said he saw his first "painted cat" recently, and he said that the cat had tried to lick off the paint and had ulcers on its tongue. This could be a jest also, but I suppose someone could have been taken in by the book too and actually tried to do one. Well, I hope most people realize the whole book is very likely an elaborate joke and don't try to paint anymore cats if it can be harmful to them, but the book as just a book of remarkable cat "paintings" is quite entertaining.

. This book is remarkable for the variety of reactions it elicits from people. I took it into the office last week and found that while some people couldn't stop laughing (as I did), others read it slowly, almost reverentially. A few even got mad that folks would paint their feline companions. I think there's a big surprise factor in seeing the cats we're so familiar with suddenly transformed into something quite unexpected -- some are not even like cats any more, and it makes people react quite strongly. Well worth a look, and a great read too. One of the funniest books I've read in while. J Petherick CA

As a person who has been painting her cats for years, I was delighted to see that this is widely accepted and practiced! My only complaint is the lack of information on safe dyes and paints for this use. I fear that some people might use toxic paints and dyes on their animals.

I got this book for Christmas 2002. I'm an art student, so I appreciated the spot-on parodies of art criticism. However, I can also easily tell that these cats were "painted" in Photoshop or a similar image-manipulation program, using filters and processes that give a furry texture to painted areas. There is one photo I'm not certain about (a white cat with blue hearts), but in almost any other photo in the book, the digital processing is pretty obvious. The cats aren't physically painted... it's their photos that have been decorated, not their bodies. I'm really alarmed by the concept that people aren't looking closely enough at the pictures to tell that they're normal cat photos that have been manipulated to look "painted." Some of them are really clever and enjoyable; I like the cat who has been given a curly moustache, the cat painted to look like an orange and blue carp, and the cat who has tribal "tattoos". Since this book does not, however, have a big sign on the front that says "THIS IS A PARODY" - and it should - please don't buy yourself a copy if you don't get the joke, and please don't buy it for anyone else who you think might take it seriously and try to paint their cat. It may sound like a cute idea, but you could really hurt your beloved pet... and who would want to do that?

I really enjoyed *Why Paint Cats*- the photography and visual presentation is amazing. All the cats look beautiful! I have bought it for several friends and it really does make a wonderful gift- the perfect coffee table book!

I think the PICTURES of the cats have been painted (or whatever word you want to use for it.) Why I think so - first of all, this is obviously a spoof, like the authors' other books. Secondly, I don't think cats would willingly submit to such elaborate art jobs - my cats wouldn't, I'm sure. I gave a copy of this for Christmas to my sister-in-law's mother, and she liked it very much.

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