



# Cat a Day

Exploring the immensely rewarding relationship that is being a human lucky enough to live with cats in their life.

A lifetime of bottled up cats and art flow out.

A journey of love and loss, of joy and pain.

In 2016 the celebrated feline The Bear died. Jo instinctively drew the small black sad cat in black biro in her morning pages. The next day she found she drew more cats and soon had dedicated sketch pads for them living by her bed. Since then she has drawn a cat a day, usually first thing in the morning. Each time new inspiration is needed a new cat or cat experience appears to fuel more felines to fill the pages.

Some of the Cat a Day sketch cats go on to become CoffeyCats, whether it be on greetings cards, or notelets, others feature on mugs and t-shirts. Some of them develop into further original artworks.

This exhibition features a few of the hundreds of cats produced so far; the collection has been created for the Tiny Cat Gallery and other exhibitions of great works on a small scale.

*(warning: contains live animals and sad moments)*

## Artists Statement

Jo Coffey is an artist living in rural Devon.

She loves nature, plants, and gardens; cats, colour, and patterns; textiles, psychology and language.

Jo works with various media: pencil, pastel, sharpies and fine liners; watercolour, brusho, and acrylics; textiles, papers and found items.

Jo's art currently is dominated by cats and exploring their nature, their importance to us, their elegance and shapes, and the pleasures and pain they bring into our lives.

## The artists relationship with cats

I have had cats in my life pretty much constantly since I was a baby thanks to ailurophile grandparents.

As a small child my urging of my parents to get a kitten after reading Jennie by Paul Gallico was given unexpected support by the appearance of mice in our house.

I have loved and learnt from every single cat, even those who were only with me a few months, days or hours. There are always a few who snuggle deeper into your soul. Smokey, that first mouser of my childhood, a practical and gentle cat. Darling Lucypie who kept me alive through depression and nursed escaped Russian hamsters like tiny kittens. Completing my trinity of personal feline royalty is Harley Kittenson who lived 22 ½ wonderful years and who lay on my chest for her last day, passing peacefully in my arms, to never leave me.

I have taken courses on feline psychology and read vet nursing books, Bast books and web advice, all to better understand and engage with the felines in my life; to serve them as they deserve.

I tend to befriend cats faster than I get to know people, and to me, being liked by a cat is one of the best references a person can have.

I love their movement and fluidity, their flexibility and character. Each different but all wonderful.

If you haven't read it, I urge you, read Jennie, feed it to your children

<https://www.harpercollins.co.uk/9780007395194/jennie-collins-modern-classics/>



## Pawtraits - The Bear

July 2020

coloured pencil, rollerball, organza ribbon

16cmx27cm

£60

16th December 2016 The Bear died.

Many beyond his immediate family loved, knew and mourned him.

The Bear was tweeted as mysadcat and was a star element of some of his owner Tom Cox's books.

His impact and loss lurched my artistic recovery into a new stage. From working hard at The Artists Way for the second time round, I found myself drawing him through tear flooded eyes, for every cat I've lost, in my Morning Pages, which had until then been mostly words and illuminated titles. His passing opened the flood gates and I soon started filling dedicated sketch pads with cats. Accurate cats, stylised cats, messy cats, neat cats, vague representations of cats. I have been drawing a cat a day since then. He started me on a journey which, at three and a half years in, I am still in the early stages of, but which has already taken me to new and unimagined places.

My immense thanks are due to Tom Cox for his wonderful writings. long and short, whom, both being Devon based, I like to imagine that one day I may get to share a drink with and thank him for sharing so very much of his cats in such life filled writing.

To learn more about the wonderful cat who was The Bear

<http://tom-cox.com/cats/goodbye-kind-friend-rip-the-bear-1995-2016/>

In the original image The Bear was a simple sorrow filled black biro line drawing, for this piece he has soft pencil for his soft fur, and a slight golden glow reflecting the near deified status he seemed to achieve.



## Pawtraits – Harley-Kittenson\*

July 2020 incomplete  
coloured pencil, rollerball

approx 23cmx19cm

Not yet for sale

One of my trinity of personal feline royalty is Harley Kittenson. Harley was adopted out to me in 1996 by a dear friend saving her from a rescue centre. Julia was determined that Harley was mine and that we belonged together. Julia was right. Harleys favourite place was on my chest, under my chin, and then only because she couldn't get inside my head. She was my little button and a soul mate, and I loved every hissy purry ounce of her.

By 2018 she had a lovely local vet making special trips to care for the wonder cat of 1½ lbs and over 22 years who lived on pure love and gravy.

I had the deep honour of having her lie on me peacefully for the whole of her last day until her body eventually gave in and let go, will could no longer hold her here, and her soul was able at last to properly nuzzle up right inside me.

In the early days of cat a day she modelled for a few of the CoffeyCats who became greetings cards. I had a lull in my cat drawing during her last days finding facing it almost too painful to bear, but in grieving for her I found drawing my memory of her, so very feintly, in light pencil helped.

This piece is reflecting on a slightly younger, but still tiny, idealised Harley, now regaining some richness of colour, still the solitary cat, still a bottomless well needing filling with love.



## Pawtraits - Mme Millie Paws

July 2020

coloured pencil, rollerball, sharpie pens,  
lace fabric

18.5cmx25.5cm

£60



In 2018 within a week of my beloved Harley Kittenson dying, my ailurophile Nan Millicent Olive, also passed. It seemed right that I take a break from my 40 years of cat ownership and instead foster cats for the Cinnamon Trust. All the joy of loving a cat who will benefit from a host with a good understanding of cat psychology and support but the freedom to sometimes go visiting friends, a brief break from long term commitment.

Two funerals, a wedding and an adoption: The Universe and Dawn knew otherwise, appearing late at my bosses wedding Dawn announced to me "I have your new cat in my barn". A bite-wounded and bedraggled, skinny little mite with a few long tufts on her flat thin coat, she was far closer to being dead in a ditch than we like to remember. With an olive mark on her nose and reminding me of my Nan's cat of my childhood, it seems resistance was futile and temporary fostering soon extended to full ownership (of us by her). Mme MilliePaws had read the book, the book was Perfect Catting and she followed it to the letter.

She is now our playful, plump, fluffy long haired sweetie, who is that rare creature: a silky tummied cat who loves stretching out exposing her soft underbelly, but one who actually lets me nuzzle my face in it, usually with no lacerations (she saves those for my partners feet).

This image is created in soft pencil with a light use of ink to define her boundaries, bold bright sharpie for her paws. The space gives a sense of looking down at her tumminess, and the lace to give an almost frisky boudoire feel. (Millie was entire when we got her. We 'enjoyed' a full season of lordosis with singing and closed windows in 30 degrees whilst she got strong enough for surgery).

For more on The Cinnamon Trust and their work supporting the elderly, terminally ill and their pets <https://cinnamon.org.uk/cinnamon-trust/>



## Cat Hole

July 2020

coloured pencil, rollerball, brush, glitter velvet ribbon

16cmx27cm

£80

As with all deep grief for a loved one and daily companion, being bereaved of Harley Kittenson left a hole which will always echo in me. I sketched this a few times but it wouldn't cohere into the right image until now. Not until I'd started to understand that it was the brightness we look back on that makes all around our head feel so dark when the loved one is gone.

The best loved cats leave a lasting cat hole.

No other cat could fill it.

They are all a sweet distraction from her absence.

Fortunately an effective distraction sometimes, but I will always miss the joy of being able to hold her one more time, to tell her she is my little love button or to let her slip up my jumper and into my sleeve, nuzzling in my armpit for security.

Harley I love you.

Harley I miss you.



Pin Up

July 2020

coloured pencil and rollerball

16cmx27cm

£60

Whilst loving a cat and having them leave us by dying is immensely sad and leaves a hole, the wound from having your cat go missing creates a screaming grief of ineffective desperation.

At this time poems started appearing alongside the images. I have a separate book where the cat poems gather, they sometimes act as inspiration for Cat-a-Day pieces, some even combine with them.

This particular piece appeared all in one go, image and poem, in an awen filled moment in morning pages in smudgy black biro and it is reproduced here in rollerball, and coloured pencil, with judicious use of a white rollerball to reproduce the smudging of tears on the page. It is just the start of a whole series of missing cat images.

If you ever find a cat, even deceased, please take them to a vet. A vet can scan them and locate their owners. It is always better to know than to imagine and fear.



## Graphic cat - ZigZag

July 2020

sharpie pens, metallic pens,  
washi tape & decorative webbing

15.5cmx24cm

£50

As Cat-a-Day developed I pass through phases where I explore what IS a cat.

The more stylised the drawings become the more it is about their essence and their mood, their characters and their spirit. Exploring just what the energy in a cat is. A whole series of cats came out floating on patterns.

I particularly liked this one as there is an unknown element to it.

Just as a cat in it's entirety is unknowable, it is uncertain if this is a peaceful resting tabby patterned friend camouflaged on a lawn; the energy emating from an energetic puss on the 'nip, or a tragic tyre tread threading through the final moments of this furry existence (something which has stolen far more of my friends than is right).

The reflective metallic pens may reflect the metal of a car, or the shining energy of a nip head, or simply be a decorative device adding to the many shades of camouflage.







## Graphic cat - Jazz Dance Cats\*

July 2020 incomplete

rollerball & sharpie

24cmx30cm

Not yet for sale

One of the most joyous elements of some cats is their leaping energy, gymnastic ambitions and their ability to flow mid air between one shape and another, sleek martial artist dancers.

I particularly liked the photography of Hisakata Hiroyuki and the "Ninja Cats" series of photographs of cats mid air. The work involved treats or toys being thrown for stray cats to encourage the wonderful leaps and acrobatics which are captured in the beautiful images.

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/hisakatahiroyuki/>



Whilst some cats curl and twist others lightly twist and flow. Jazz dance cats explores this cool elegance and combines it with the cats deep fluidity visioning it as a dance.

The fluidity of rollerball pens and the energy of bright colours seems to suit this image, though early versions were originally created in sharpie pens.





Flower Girl 1\*

July 2020

Brusho, rollerball, sharpie, metallic pens, glitter, texture/handmade paper, texture yarn and paper & gem flowers

33cmx36cm

£80



Flower Girl 2

July 2020

coloured pencil, rollerball, sharpie pens, eyelash yarn and paper flowers

22cmx32cm

£80

A response acknowledging that whoever they are, whatever their nature, for some of us all cats scatter joy and beauty wherever they go.

For tiny cats FlowerGirl2 is an especially joy filled playful interactive piece.

The pain felt in the other images, is always the absence of this precious vitalising feline beauty.



## Tail words

I very much hope you have enjoyed these images.

If you would like to purchase any individual pieces they are available during the exhibition, and soon afterwards from @Tiny.Cat.Gallery on instagram and after that from myself at [cats@jocoffey.uk](mailto:cats@jocoffey.uk)

These images will be joining the selection of early Coffey Cats greetings cards on my website <http://www.jocoffey.uk/CoffeyCats>



I also have a Redbubble store where you can chose other merchandise bearing a selection of Coffey Cats cats, including some from Cat a Day.

<https://www.redbubble.com/people/CoffeyCatsArt>



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if it is very important to you that they are accurate email me and I will double check.*

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but we aim at accurate representation.*

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Collection may be possible with payment cleared in advance. Email to check.*

*Images may be available for commercial use only if appropriate fees are agreed in advance.  
Images marked \* are not available for safety reasons at tiny cat gallery due to issues of scale.*

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