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Artists create 'Foreclosure Cat' portraits

From Disney animators to greeting card artists and children's book illustrators, artists around the country are creating portraits of the more than 50 "foreclosure cats" and kittens.

The cats were discovered by a Cincinnati, Ohio, rescuer in early May, apparently weeks after an evicted man walked away from his home without telling anyone about the cats and kittens trapped inside without food, water or medical attention. The foreclosure cats gained national attention when they were featured in a business publication as the latest victims of accelerating foreclosure trends nationwide.

More than 40 of the cats and kittens are still seeking homes, many only recently spayed, neutered and sufficiently recovered from their ordeal to be ready for "forever" families. The art is being donated to raise funds for veterinary care and to help find adopters and foster homes for the abandoned animals.

Robin Moro, a Cincinnati artist who initially answered the call for help by fostering two of the cats, Delta and Lucy, came up with the idea to invite artists around the country to contribute original art to the project, in the form of portraits of each cat.

"Artists as far west as California, east to Rhode Island and south to Florida were inspired by the plight of these cats and kittens and have created or are working on portraits," said Moro. Media include acrylics, oils, pastels, fabric and digital. Rhode Island artist Janet Parker Prata created portraits of three of the cats, including a framed mirror featuring Titus, an orange tabby. Cincinnati artist Karen Kurak has created fabric art of Max and Mae, and Moro herself is contributing four paintings, two each of Delta and Lucy.

Some of the cats and kittens bear permanent injuries and scars such as eye damage, blindness or chronic colds. The artists were asked not to hide these characteristics, while capturing the joy and energy of animals finally receiving medical care, attention and love. Cincinnati artist Meredith Smith captured Tortellini's joyous spirit by showing the kitten's damaged eye as a happy wink.

"When I saw the most recent photos of Tortellini, she seemed so happy, confident and completely unhindered by the permanent damage to her eye," said Smith. "I wanted my portrait of her to express these traits and present her in the dignified way she deserves."

A Web site, www.ForeclosureCats.org, originally created to solicit volunteers, accept foster and adopter applications and donations, has been revamped to include the art, as well as photos and stories about each cat. People can see the art, read about the artists, and order framed or unframed prints at the Web site. The original art, once completed for all of the cats, will be sold with all proceeds going to help with veterinary bills, supplies, boarding and other expenses for the cats. Adopters will receive prints signed by the artists.

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