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A Cat May Look On A Queen

curated by Eric Ruschman
opening 6-8pm March 7, 2020
March 7 – April 25, 2020

The title for the show is derived from the proverbial saying "a cat may look at a king," which was passed down for quite some time via word of mouth before first being published in a collection of known English language proverbs via John Heywood in 1546 (directly: A cat maie looke on a kyng). Roughly, it is a phrase used to argue that a person with perceived "low status" still has rights, importance, and agency.

It wasn't my initial intent to have cats lurking around the edges of this entire exhibition; but, with Ad Minoliti's happily snoozing feline in their large painting *Dollhouse* (Amiel), Antonio Adams' multiple mirrored cat effigies of deceased celebrities and historical figures, and Anna Anthropy's playable *Gay Cats Go To The Weird Weird Woods* video game, cats do become more than just a suggestion or a recurrent image. I know I'm always looking for an excuse to find a way to talk about cats as either a metaphor or a lesson on companionship. So, perhaps my subconscious was just at work.

I first stumbled upon the thought of this title while reading Haruki Murakami's "1Q84" a few years back. I have a quote written down in my notes, "A cat can gaze upon a king, as the proverb goes, and after a dry martini or a sazerac cocktail or two, we're all cats." I guess I had meant to look up this aforementioned proverb, and, well, several years later here we are.

I like this title and this proverb because I'm still not really sure what it means. Or, at least, I'm not sold on the idea that it means what we seem to have collectively agreed that it means. A sneaking suspicion I have is that it could just be nonsense. And although I enjoy the conceit that nonsense would be dispensed as opposition to authority, it seems all too possible that this tool can be (as has been) coopted.

But maybe after a sazerac cocktail or two...