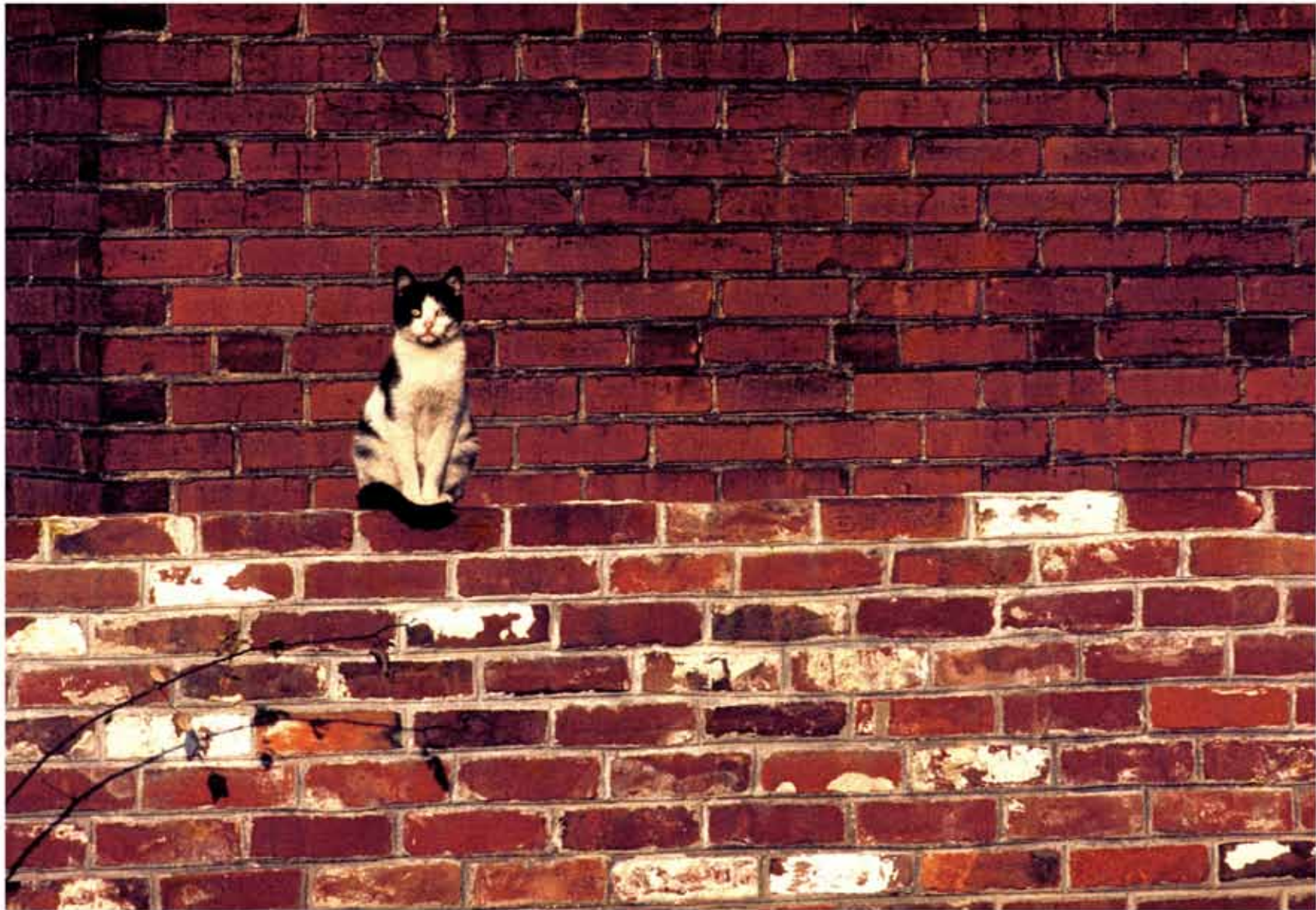


Alley Cat



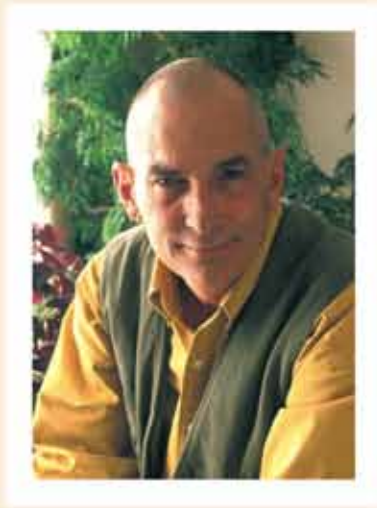
OLD CITY PHILADELPHIA

Photographer William Rain

Alley Cat

This book is a photographic portrait of the lives of alley cats, street cats and homeless cats. I photographed them in alleys, backstreets empty lots and abandon houses. I ventured into their territory with an explorers eye. Like big cats on the savanna these smaller cousins of theirs lived wild in the deserted streets of Old City Philadelphia.

- William Rain



Photographed

1972 - 1977

I first encountered the alley cats when I moved into their territory, the Old City area of Philadelphia. Two and three story rundown brick buildings stood close to the Delaware river front. Immigrant homes, ethnic neighborhoods, now mostly abandoned with a few inexpensive rentals amongst them. I acquired one of these for forty dollars a month. I noticed right off I had a lot of neighborly cats with no apparent home address. When I would walk to or from my house I was constantly being observed; from cellar windows, roof tops and wooden fences down the street. (Here he comes, watch him). I started to feel like I was walking through a wild life jungle. So I thought it would be a good perspective to photograph them In their natural wild urban habitat, The Alley Cat.

I took up the project as if I were on a wild life safari hunt on the Serengeti plains of Africa. Instead of big cats I would be stalking their smaller cousins in the wild and deserted back lots, roof tops, and side streets of the city. Being stealthy and observant on my part I was able to discover their hang-outs, lairs and favorite corners for spying.

Some portraits were casual encounters in passing. I used my 35 mm Leica camera for those. Other photos were set -ups with my tripod and long lens. One of my favorites is the cover photograph of the cat on the red brick wall. He is so still and focused watching me. Some images were from my own hide-outs near their hide-outs. One morning as I hid in an old abandoned building waiting, a young black and white cat poked her head out from the old out house that stood silently in the fresh snow. (p-45) Being familiar with their haunts and movements would allow me to photograph many of these secret scenes.

Their lives were filled with struggle. Young kittens looked fresh from their mothers [p 38] but soon would show the weariness of hardship on their faces. After years on the streets, never being in a house, one old black cat I named Bear was a good example. (P-40) He was scarred and chewed down by one turf war after another. His ears and tail just stubs. He was at the mercy of handouts from sympathetic poor folks who understood his burden. I saw many empty cans of cat food scattered here and there, alms for the poor. The alley cats were the last tenants of the old city before it became remodeled and gentrified.

Impostors may have presented themselves posing as authentic, wishing to be more daring than domestic p[61]. I couldn't know for there was no documentation to verify their authenticity, no 'Alley Cat' papers. I knew that I always felt involved in some ruse. Feline reality appearing and disappearing. Some cat trick! Peek a boo! I see you, now I'm gone. If you have a cat, you know the feeling; that odd sense while being stared at, that the cat is thinking something about you, and you don't know what it is, CATS!.....

It was easy to empathize with their society. Their daily routine was to use every opportunity to find comfort and shelter from the storm. They had to avoid brutes, cuddle the young, stalk birds and mice, and find the best places for a hand out. Surely they expended as much effort as any of us at our day jobs. Although they were alley cats, I did not pity them, I marveled at their ingenuity. During this five year period of photographing them most were regulars at their posts showing up in the neighborhood daily. Now and then I would miss one and wonder what had happened to him, then a new face on the block would appear (P-44) young and full of new life. What an adventure it was photographing these beautiful Alley Cats.

Rain -

I decided to categorize the cat activities into ten basic themes that I was able to photograph.

1 - Sunning P-24 - 32

2 - Napping p-25 - 32 - 36 - 37

3 - Loafing p-11 - 12 - 22 - 24 - 39 - 52

4 - Staring p-10 - 14 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 31 - 32 - 38 - 42 - 43 - 62

5 - Roaming p-26 - 28 - 34 - 35 - 41 - 50 - 53

6 - Hiding p-23 - 27 - 29 - 30 - 48 - 49 - 51 - 55 - 56

7 - Scowling p-16 - 40 - 57 - 60 - 61 - 65

8 - Posing p-9 - 44 - 45 - 58 - 59

9 - Spying p-13 - 15 - 20 - 21 - 46 - 47 - 51 - 54 - 60 - 63 - 64

10 - Pregnant P-66





















































































































THE END

MEOOW

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In memory of my
favorite domestic Cat.

'Florida'

A pharaoh amongst his kind.

He was my friend.





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