



all photographs Alina Andrei

## How To Photograph Cats by Alina Andrei

The Golden Rules:

1. Don't feel sympathetic if they sleep. You can still photograph them. (A Hungarian author wrote a story around his cat that was sleeping and purring on his manuscript).
2. Communication: Talk to the cats; call them by their names (Felix, Valjean, Berlioz, Tom, Oscar, Ozzy). They might not respond, but they'll look expressively into the camera (with contempt most of the times).
3. Before the photo session, treat them well. Mice, fish, rubber balls. They'll be grateful. You could substitute mice with sausages, milk, or cat-grass.
4. If you photograph them on the roof, don't forget, only cats have 9 lives.
5. Onlookers are sympathetic to cats next to big dogs. It works every time, especially if you entitle the picture "Two Friends", or "Sheltering". You could sell the picture to calendar and post card publishers, or advertising. All you need is to find a slightly groggy Saint Bernard to be able to squeeze your cat under his paws. Watch out he's not stepping on the cat though!
6. Pictures with ladies with leopard dotted skirts and cats on leash are also well regarded. If you lightly smear some milk (or honey) on your woman's knees, you can be assured that the cat will not leave before the photo session ends.
7. In the Eastern Europe villages, one can find cats lying on the brick oven. The peasants will invite you to a vodka shot if you photograph their cat, but the pictures may become blurry. Watch out!
8. No cat can resist three things: a golden fish bowl, a flashlight beaming on the wall and a toilet flush.
9. Don't raise your voice against your friends' cats, even if they peed on your digital camera. Swearing towards your host's wife could be forgivable, but not if addressed to their cat.
10. Cat's smell sense is forty times more developed than humans. Women photographers should restrain themselves in using strong perfumes if they don't want their cat models to jump through the window.

When I was in kindergarten, my teachers used to give me crayons and paper to keep me quiet. For unknown reasons, I was doodling surrealistic cats, black, green, blue, with three, or five legs (I didn't know how to count in those times, and I didn't really care). Almost all of them were happily floating over trees and roofs, with chicken or angel wings. I was told so many times that cats don't fly, and I've tended to agree up to the day when I've watched my neighbor's cat fly from the third floor of my building to catch a sparrow. He landed on the roses underneath, no scratches at all. From then on, I've understood that cats can actually fly, but only when they feel like. I was delighted when I saw Halsman's "Dali

Atomicus". In 1948, Philippe Halsman photographed Dali flying off his easel, with three wet cats and a floating chair. I've suspected Halsman also drew flying cats in his childhood. He needed many buckets of water and put the cats and Dali through many jumps to catch the moment. If I'd been born many years ahead, and knew about their intentions, I'd have been more than happy to help with the flying cats.

