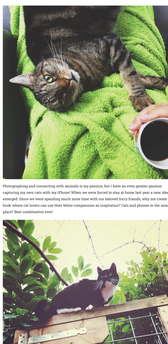
Photographing cats with your smartphone

by Jolanda Bonkhout, The Netherlands
Photographer, Photo Diary Contributor

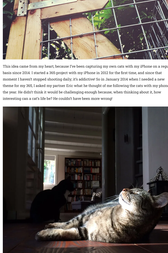
I'm pleased today to welcome Jolanda Bonkhout, a Pet Photographer – and dear friend – from The Netherlands. Originally from Belgium, Jolanda moved over the countryside five years ago to Zeeland, the southernmost province of Holland. Her family consist of one human, Eric, and 4 cats, Blackie, Pixi, Teddy and Mina, who all live with her inside their lives and their hearts more. She is also a pet mama to 14 chickens, 2 goats and 2 ducks. All of her animals have names but she seems to be the only one who remembers them. A biologist turned stress she's tired but never stitch the surroundings by care. She's currently living her dream life of having a large animal family with plenty of space to roam in her garden!

What an honor it is to be here and to get the chance to tell share with you my new adventure publishing a book about my photography with a smartphone, and how you can create intimate and unexpected photos yourself too!

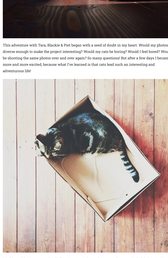
The idea for this book has been going around in my head for a while. On several occasions in the past friends have asked me when my "Coffee Table Book" would be out, I would laugh and say "One day". I've been a pet photographer since 2006 and have had the pleasure to photograph many beautiful cats and dogs here through the years, but somehow the idea of a book about my models just didn't fit



Photographing and connecting with animals is my passion, but I have an even greater passion: capturing my own cats with my iPhone. When we were forced to stay at home last year a new idea emerged. Since we were spending much more time with our beloved furry friends, why not create a book where we can share our cute little companions as inspiration? Cats and photos in the same place? Pure coincidence, ever!



This idea came from my heart, because I've been capturing my own cats with my iPhone on a regular basis since 2014. I started a 365 project with my iPhone in 2012 for the first time, and since that moment I haven't stopped shooting daily. It's addictive! So in January 2014 when I needed a new theme for my 365, I asked my partner Eric what he thought of me following the cats with my phone for the year. He didn't think it would be challenging enough because, when thinking about it, how interesting can a cat's life be? He couldn't have been more wrong!



This adventure with Tara, Blackie & Pixi began, with a seed of doubt in my heart. Would my photos be diverse enough to make the project interesting? Would my cats be boring? Would I feel bored? Would I be shooting the same photos over and over again? So many questions! But after a few days I became more and more excited, because what I've learned is that cats lead such an interesting and adventurous life!

Working with your cat can be challenging. As cat lovers know, cats have a mind of their own. You could ask them to sit and pose like you would with dogs, but the outcome won't be what you have in mind. Photographing cats needs a different approach. I've found the best strategy is having your phone in your pocket at all times, while being aware of the location of your cat at the same time. Every time I forget to keep my phone close, I regret it

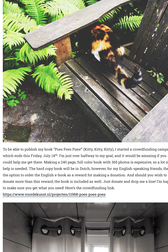
The basics: Be patient | Shoot | Practice

The reward from my "365ettinquest" was a collection of photos that filled my heart with love. Capturing the contentment on Pixi's face while sitting on my lap, the beautiful pose in which Tara stretched herself in mysterious activities were a joy to witness and shoot. Their reality started working with me and watching them being perfect with me was an awesome experience. Some photos made me laugh, and sometimes we cry from emotion. But all of my photos are special in one way or another, even the sassy bloopers.

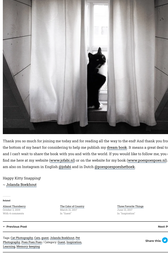
After finishing this project, I've continued to photograph my beautiful friends. It's become an addiction haha, one that I'm very grateful for. Tara left us in January 2018, and the first Sissy I did was Pig through all of her photos to find one to print and frame. That gave me so much comfort.

About the book

My book, featuring my 365 with my sweet Black, Pixi and Tara, is meant for all cat lovers as an inspiration to start photographing your cat yourself. It is filled with photos and tips and tricks to help you capture your cat in a unique way. I've included photos of my cats in unexpected situations and sometimes together doing the same. I cover the basics of everyday point of view shooting, shooting in square, filling the frame, sensitivity, catching emotions, capturing rituals, how to get close and what to notice, along with tips on backgrounds, composition and more!



Obviously photos are a big part of the book, because they illustrate the many facets of a cat's life – many moments that you might not have thought to try to capture before. I also illustrate how easy and possible it is for you to capture your cat all year long. The book teaches you how to look at your cat in a new light, how to be more open to unexpected moments and to recognize opportunities when they present themselves. Overall, I'll teach you how to capture compelling, unexpected, tear-jerking, joyful and funny photos, even how "mistakes" are memorable too!



To be able to publish my book "Pets Pure Pawz" (EN), KOY, KOYO, I started a crowdfunding campaign, which ends this Friday, July 28th. I'm just now halfway to my goal, and it would be amazing if you could help me get there. Making a 240 page, full-color book with 365 photos is expensive, so a lot of people have to help me to make it happen. Because I'm a small publisher, I'm very dependent on people like you to the option to order the English e-book as a reward for making a donation. And should you wish to donate more than this reward, the book is included as well. Just donate and drop me a line! I'm happy to make sure you get what you need! Here's the crowdfunding link:

https://www.zoodekoud.nl/projecten/1000-jaar-pure-pawz

Thank you so much for joining me today and for reading all the way to the end! And thank you from the bottom of my heart for considering to help me publish my dream book. It means a great deal to me, and I can't wait to share the book with you and with the world. If you would like to follow me you can find me here at my website (www.jolab.nl) or on the website for my book (www.purepawzpets.nl). I am also on Instagram in English @jolab and in Dutch @purepawzpetsdutchwork.

Happy Kitty Snapping!
– Jolanda Bonkhout

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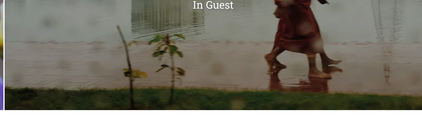

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Kirstin Mckee 9 hours ago / Reply

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