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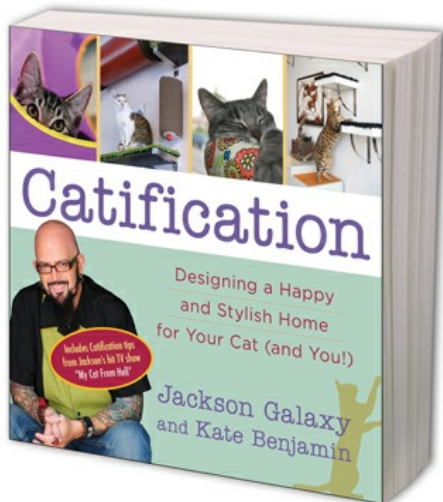
Catification. The Review & Interview with Jackson Galaxy & Kate Benjamin

Mon, 2014-10-20 15:13 — Robin Olson

In May 2011 the first episode of [My Cat From Hell](#) ^[1] aired on Animal Planet. That moment heralded a new age for cats. It created a paradigm shift from calling people “cat owners” to “cat guardians”— where behavior issues of cats no longer fell solely with the cat but more often with their human's misconceptions. What had been explored brilliantly in print years before by other cat behaviorists failed to reach the ever-growing audience of frustrated cat parents, who were giving up their cats to shelters in record numbers. Nothing made an impact on cat guardians the way a television program could-if it was done well.

Enter the eye-poppingly tattooed Jackson Galaxy. When he took the stage we were mesmerized. He was charismatic, a colorful peacock with a disarming understanding of how cats tick. He showed the world just how deeply misunderstood cats really were and it broke our hearts to realize how wrong we'd been to vilify our cats.

In each episode we witnessed one cat after another emerge from of the confines of their chrysalis into a beautiful, confident creature. It touched anyone who shared their home with cats. We learned that if we were to truly love our cats then we must understand their needs. **This is the season of the Cat and a new book, *Catification* is just what they've been waiting for us to read.**



Catification: Designing a Happy and Stylish Home for Your Cat (and You!)

teams up the savvy cat behaviorist Jackson Galaxy with his *My Cat From Hell* design-darling Kate Benjamin, (*who is also the guru of the deliciously cat-centric product mecca, hauspanther.com* ^[2]) to create the must-read book for every cat lover.



© John Burcham Photography. Used with permission from the author. Kate Benjamin in her studio.

Catification goes far beyond a simple well-designed full-color book of clever ways to enrich your cat's environment. It's also a concise guide to cat behavior. The reader will learn how to both identify what type of personality their cat has and how to create a space appropriate for that cat. Using clever, easy-to-remember terms Galaxy makes it simple for us to decode how our cat sees the world. Is she a *Mojito* or a *Napoleon*? Is another cat in the home a *Wallflower*? As we begin to answer these questions (*there's even a worksheet starting on pg 38 to guide you*) we learn how to create positive changes appropriate for any cat.

The most significant message in this book is that it's important to see the world through a cat's eyes to create a harmonious environment that the cat guardian would enjoy adding to their home. Through Galaxy's skilled descriptions and Benjamin's tasteful design choices we begin to see how empowering our cats through an enriched environment is the only way to go.

Catification is **not** about hanging shelves on the wall, and to fans of MCFH, building a "*super highway*" for your cat. **It's about helping your cat find their Mojo, a term Galaxy coined that refers to helping cats find their confidence in their space and being able to be their best selves.** Do you really want your cat to be the cat that always hides under the bed?



©Kate Benjamin. Used with permission from the author. One of Kate's kitties enjoying her catio.

What was apparent right away from the clean and elegant design is that this book was going to be a breeze to read and understand regardless of whether you just adopted your first cat or if you're like me and have more cats than you care to reveal in a blog post.

I was fortunate to be able to spend a few minutes with Cat Daddy, Jackson Galaxy (*whose comments I've included, but paraphrased in some instances*) and later with Kate Benjamin (*who wrote direct replies to my questions and are shared verbatim*) where we discussed where the term "Catification" came from along with a few other surprises. I asked each author many of the same questions for a point of comparison.

THE INTERVIEWS

CICH: Where did the term "Catification" come from?

KB: Catification is the term that Jackson started using on his show when discussing aspects of cat behavior that have to do with environmental enrichment. As you know, Jackson's expertise is in understanding what the cats need and mine is in understanding how to meet those needs in a way that pleases the cat guardians. Catification is where our worlds overlap. We now define Catification as *"The art of designing your home to meet the needs of your cat without sacrificing your own sense of style."*

JG: *"I made it up."* Galaxy chuckles. That said, the word, inspired by years of working the cat behavior clients, was what became the key term to developing the book project.

Galaxy doesn't feel comfortable making generalizations about cats. His analogy that cats come "from the same cloud, but all are catflakes" rang true. They all have different needs and those needs change over the course of their life, making one of the underlying themes of Catification to recognize each cat's unique needs and partner that with a flexible and scalable environment.

Galaxy asked me if I recalled that Moen faucet commercial where the couple comes to the office of their designer and places an elegant faucet on his desk then says, "Build our home around this." It's the same sort of Designer/Client approach with cats, only this time you're the designer and your cats are the clients.

2. CICH: Describe the "ah ha" moment when you realized that cats needed more than a carpeted "kitty condo" or corrugated scratching pad to enhance their environment.

KB: A long time ago, even before I started writing about cat products, I began experimenting in my own home, building wall-climbing structures for my cats to expand their territory and keep them active. I think it was just a natural instinct for me to build things for my cats, maybe because of my background in interior design. I always felt that it was important to create an environment that is interesting for my cats but also attractive to me.

JG: Jackson Galaxy understood early on that cats needed more than just a cat bed by a sunny window to help them become the *"best version of themselves they can be."* He admits for somewhat selfish reasons that he's tired of hearing excuses about why some cat guardians can't be more understanding of what their cats need. **Case in point, when he has to give "homework" to one of his clients and the first request is to add a litter pan to a socially significant part of the home. "People would rather have their cat pee on their drapes than put a litter pan into their living room."**

That frustration gave birth to the idea of *catification*. It asked a simple question. How would he find a common ground that allowed for a litter pan to be placed wherever it was best for the cat while balancing the aesthetic and practical needs of the family? **Galaxy wants to hold cat lovers "feet to the fire" he's so passionate about this topic. He urges us to remove barriers that leave their cat unable to blossom and be their best cat-self.**



Used with permission from the author. Example of a simple way to catify a space.

3. CICH: Why not just let cats go outside to get enrichment?

KB: I'm an advocate for keeping cats indoors simply because there are too many dangers for them outside. A lot of people think it's unnatural to keep a cat inside, but with some simple changes to your home, cats can live full, rich lives indoors and you won't have to worry about what they may encounter if they go outside.

JG: Whether cats are allowed outdoors is a hot-button topic. Galaxy plainly replied that *"It's your call, but you gotta know the risks because you don't want to compromise."* In essence, though most people understand the inherent risks to cats living outdoors they simply make excuses to not make changes so their cat can be just as happy indoors as outdoors. **One of the goals of Catification is to show everyone that "catifying" a space can be painless and there's no reason not to do it since it doesn't mean a costly change if someone is on a limited budget.**

4. CICH: "Catification: Designing a Happy and Stylish Home for Your Cat (and You!)" contains a number of real-world examples of how to enrich your cat's environment. How many people submitted their stories and photos to you, hoping to earn a place in your book and which one stood out the most to you and why.

KB: Jackson and I have received hundreds of submissions from cat guardians all around the world, and we love seeing every one of them! We chose examples for this book that we felt would inspire others to see the possibilities for their own homes, even if they don't have a lot of money or advanced skills. **Simple projects like the table leg scratcher from Lucio Castro in Brooklyn (page 168) stand out to me just because it is so functional and elegant. It shows that anyone can do this and do it in a way that doesn't look like a crazy cat lady!**



Used with permission from the author. Page 168. Table leg scratcher.



Used with permission from the author. Page 168. Table leg scratcher in use.

5. CICH: Would you say one of the goals of your book is to change people's perspective to better understand how their cat views the world? If so, are there any other goals you set for yourself and which one was the most important.

KB: Absolutely, Catification seeks to help cat guardians see the world through the eyes of their cat. We want people to understand that they are the interior designer and their cat is the client. The designer needs to know the client's preferences and come up with a plan to accommodate those preferences. We also want to get cat guardians excited about the possibilities of Catification and what it can do for their cats. **It's really a lot of fun to come up with a plan, implement it, and then watch the cats as they explore and use their new feature.** We hope people will be inspired to do more and more.

JG: Galaxy wants to empower cat guardians so they can embrace the possibility of deepening the bond they share with their cats. It's extremely gratifying to make changes to a cat's environment and see him/her come out of their shell for the first time. The love people have for their cats is never in question, but through catification those cats can experience a dramatic shift in their day to day life.

His hopes are that readers "get it." That they don't suffer from "paralysis by analysis." In other words, they don't get mired down by feeling like they have to create a perfect space then get overwhelmed by options. In truth, they should focus on building a flexible "skeleton" where their design can change over time because their cats needs will change over time, too.

6. CICH: You've curated examples of catification from around the world on your web site hauspanther.com, but was there one that just blew you away because of its creative solution, regardless of cost or time spent in creating it?

KB: I think the most impressive examples of fully integrated Catification come from [Japan](#) ^[3], where architects have built entire houses with the [cat features designed](#) ^[4] in from the beginning. The end result is a seamless and elegant environment that appears to work beautifully for both the resident cats and humans.

7. CICH: What would you do to your own home to make it a masterpiece of Catification or have you already achieved it?

KB: **I don't think that Catification is ever complete; it's an ongoing process. I've added some great features to my home including a large enclosed patio with climbing shelves and perches** (featured on page 228), but now that I've watched the cats use the space, I see where I can expand their superhighway and add other features. The same goes for inside, I've added pieces here and there, like the shelves over my desk featured on page 128, but now I have some bigger projects I'd like to tackle that connect everything together. **Wait until you see what I have planned for the bedroom!**



Used with permission from the author. Detail of Kate's office from page 128.

8. CICH: What would you suggest to people who have handicapped or senior cats and who want to catify their home but are concerned about their cats falling off shelves?

KB: Senior cats or cats with mobility issues do require special consideration. Definitely make sure that any surface they are climbing on has a non-slip covering, like a sisal rug remnant or rubber-backed floor mat, to give them better traction. Make sure that climbing shelves are nice and wide and you can even add a little railing on the edge. Ramps are very useful in households with senior cats or cats with mobility issues. **We show you how to make a simple cat ramp on page 183 using just a board and some sisal rope.** This ramp can be used to help cats climb up to places where they can no longer jump. The sisal rope gives them plenty of traction and serves double duty as a scratcher.



Used with permission from the author. Lovely, clear photography enhances the "how to" section of the book.

9. CICH (Only asked KB): How many cats do you have and how has catifying their space changed their inter-relationships or relationship with you?

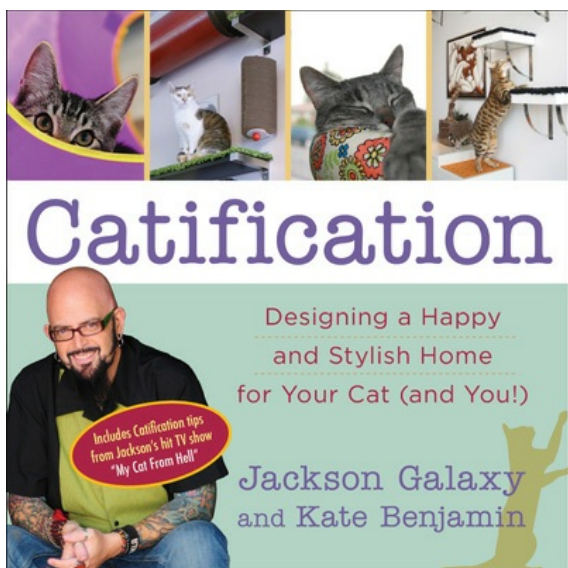
KB: I live with my boyfriend and 11 cats in our 1,100 sq ft condo. The features we've added, like the patio and the climbing areas, really expand the space and give everyone a way to spread out so they're not all fighting over the same spot. It's interesting how some of them have their favorite spots, while others just want to be wherever we are. **I can't imagine living without cats, it would be very lonely and boring!**

10. (Only asked JG): You combined homes when you married your wife Minoo. How did catification come in to play to help ease cat to cat and cat to dog introductions and did you do any planning before joining homes to how you'd set up cat superhighways?

JG: Galaxy related that it's an ongoing process for everyone and that just because he's the Cat Daddy doesn't mean things are all "rainbows and unicorns." He mentioned the recent loss of his cat, Chuppy and described him as being the "corrections officer" keeping the others in line. He wasn't necessarily the "alpha cat," but he made sure things ran smoothly. **After his passing Galaxy describes the chaos that ensued and that he and Minoo are still adjusting and adding routes throughout their home and removing any dead ends near litter pans. Right now he doesn't feel he has the luxury of imagining what it could be, but is focused on "building by necessity."**

I asked him about special needs and senior cats and how to catify for them. Galaxy hinted about there being more focus on that coming up in another project, but was hesitant to tell me more. He did offer that things like rails for shelves, or ramps

that gently rise have to be factored in for some cats. **Seniors need more horizontal catification, but he added his 23-yr old cat Velouria still wants to get on the table and he made sure there was a way for her to do that safely.**



Catification

is 304 pages in paperback and other formats and is available NOW. You can find ordering options [HERE](#).^[5] List price is about \$12.90 depending on format.

You can catch Jackson and Kate in person on their [Book Tour](#) ^[6], too! There are still a few stops left.

GIVEAWAY

ONE LUCKY PERSON will WIN A FREE COPY OF CATIFICATION (and MAYBE it will even be autographed if I can get it done when I see the authors in a few days). At least you'll get a book. Open to residents of USA only. **To enter simply LIKE our [FACEBOOK PAGE](#) ^[7], then LEAVE a comment HERE . One comment per person.** Duplicates will be eliminated. Tell me WHY you need Catification and best, funniest, most clever, subject to my choice will win a copy of the book. DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 24, 2014 2:22PM EST.

Comments

Mon, 2014-10-20 15:39 — Holly E. (not verified)

CATIFICATION - Giveaway ^[8]

I would love to win the Catification book just to have a very handy reference guide that I can take to the store with me and explore more options for my fur babies. Also, it would give me the extra clout that I need to prove to my husband that I'm NOT totally a Crazy Cat Lady who spoils their cats :)

Mon, 2014-10-20 15:52 — [Harvey Button](#) (not verified) ^[9]

Catification ^[10]

This is such a fun book, I know it will make it here to New Zealand! I like the fact it's a How-To book, an advice book and a really interesting blend of things.

Harvey

Mon, 2014-10-20 18:29 — Anna (not verified)

Looks like a great book! ^[11]

Our home is very catcentric. My husband made a great perch and wrapped the post with rope going to our upstairs.

Mon, 2014-10-20 22:55 — [Jodi McGrew](#) (not verified)

Sounds like a great book! ^[12]

I would love to learn from this book so I can help design the new cage free cat rooms that our shelter is planning to add soon.

Tue, 2014-10-21 11:40 — [Connie & The Crew \(not verified\)](#) ^[13]

ooh a possibly autographed ^[14]

ooh a possibly autographed copy? sign me up :)

Tue, 2014-10-21 13:48 — [jmuwj \(not verified\)](#)

RE: INTERVIEWS and CATIFICATION ^[15]

Your interviews with Jackson Galaxy and Kate Benjamin are fabulous! As a cat guardian/servant who's always looking for ways to further enrich and interest my beloved cats, I would love to win a copy of CATIFICATION and thank you for the opportunity to do so!

Sat, 2014-10-25 11:15 — [KendyBo \(not verified\)](#)

Cat book for me? ^[16]

Dear Mama Robin,

We know we are late but our Mom never let's us play on the computer. And it's very hard to open with no thumbs. We think you should choose us cuz we wrecked our cat tower. Mommy says 3 kittens playing on a clearance tower from PetSmart probably is too much. We just think she's too lazy to try to climb it.

maybe if she reads this book she can build us a new cooler gianter tower. Bandit wants it to have boxes and hidey holes. Maggie wants it to be covered in food. I want it to reach the ceiling and then have a secret entrance into the ductwork in this place.

Sincerely and we love you,

Smokey, Bandit and Maggie Mae

Sun, 2014-10-26 10:01 — [Meghan Finnegan \(not verified\)](#) ^[17]

Catification ^[18]

Interesting interview, and I love those table leg cat scratchers! Great idea!

Thu, 2014-10-30 11:52 — [Sam \(not verified\)](#)

Great Interview ^[19]

I'm really excited to hear that Jackson Galaxy hinted at an upcoming focus on senior/special needs cats. I'm a foster mom and several of my foster kids are hospice fosters, so while I really want to go crazy with catification, I definitely need to make sure everything is safe and accessible to the old, the disabled, and blind, because I have them all!

Thanks for the lovely interview and the giveaway!

Thu, 2014-11-20 19:39 — [Bash G \(not verified\)](#)

CATIFICATION GIVEAWAY ^[20]

Hi. I have 4 angels CHLOE,POPPET,MAU AND CHICKLES.I live in a 76m2 apartment and would love to get a copy of the book to help me make their lives as wonderful as I can.they get bored very easily and lv run out of ways to entertain them,especially when Im ill.lv taken many ideas and tips from all your shows and you tube videos.Im a cat lover and a fan of JG.an autographed copy would may me roarr and my babies purrrrr

Tue, 2014-12-30 13:55 — [Tammy Thiesse \(not verified\)](#)

Catification-Giveaway ^[21]

I love what Jackson Galaxy and Kate Benjamin are doing for the cat world! By putting more emphasis on being a responsible pet owner, hopefully the public will stop automatically blaming the pet. It usually isn't the animals "issue", but the animal's response to what is happening in the environment. People need to stop throwing animals out like yesterday's garbage.

On a lighter note, I love all of the information and ideas that I have seen posted from the Catification book. I want to include some of the ideas in our home, so our kitties can be happier and healthier. (Plus, we get to enjoy watching them!)

CICH @ [Google+](#)
Robin @ [Google+](#)

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Links

- [1] <http://www.animalplanet.com/tv-shows/my-cat-from-hell>
- [2] <http://www.hauspanther.com/>
- [3] <http://www.hauspanther.com/2012/12/31/unbelievable-cat-friendly-house-design-from-japan/>
- [4] <http://www.hauspanther.com/2012/12/31/another-amazing-cat-friendly-house-design-from-japan/>
- [5] <http://www.penguin.com/book/catification-by-jackson-galaxy/9780399166013>
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