



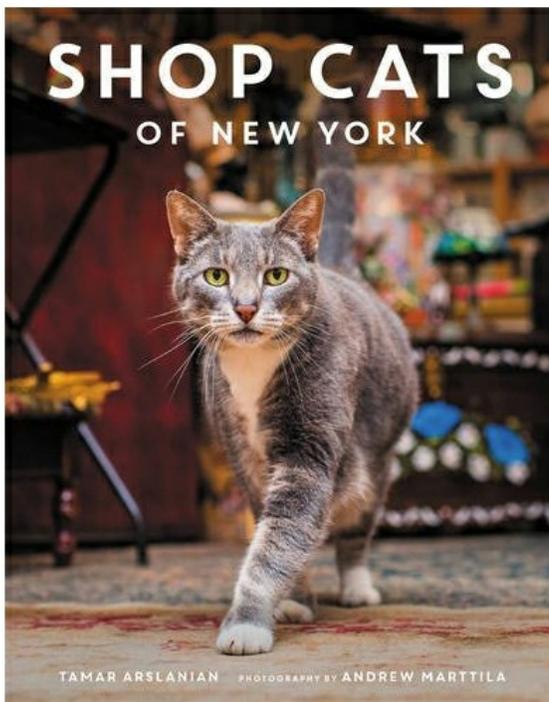
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## REVIEW and GIVEAWAY: Shop Cats of New York

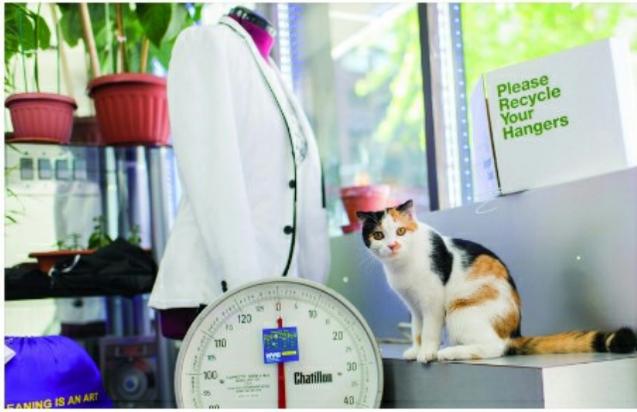
Sat, 2017-01-07 14:08 — Robin Olson

***You might notice them sitting in a window watching the world go by, or nestled comfortably, napping on a self next to merchandise that's on sale. These are the cats who make their home inside the shops of New York City, but what is their life really like?***



That question, posed by author Tamar Arslanian, was the inspiration for her book, *Shop Cats of New York*.<sup>[1]</sup> In this 176 pg, eye-poppingly colorful book, Arslanian focused her efforts on 40 beloved, cherished shop cats. These feisty felines are well cared for, some even getting fan mail from the shop's patrons. None are mistreated or left to live on scraps. Tamar makes a fine distinction between "Bodega cats" (*small markets that dot the New York cityscape, where cats are often in poor condition and mistreated*) to "shop cats" where the cat's home, from a loving-care standpoint, is the same as yours or mine.

**Shop Cats of New York is my favorite kind of book—lots of full-page, heartwarming images paired beautifully with charming stories about each featured cat. Arslanian is a heck of a writer, one who may be best known for her blog: [IHaveCat.com](http://IHaveCat.com) - "Single in the City with Cat(s)." [2] Tamar looks for the quirky, the adorable, the sometimes heartbreaking in each cat's tale, but doesn't overdo it by being too cutesy or overly maudlin.**



The book would fall flat without cat photographer extraordinaire, Andrew Martilla's images. As someone who's taken thousands of photos of her own cats, I can sincerely appreciate the level of skill it takes to go beyond the cliché posed kitty portrait. Martilla instinctively grabs the decisive moment, where placement, lighting and expression capture the essence of each cat's personality. Martilla admits he only had 30 minutes or so to photograph each cat; hardly time to focus the camera while his subjects were moving around, unwilling sit still for more than a second. The shops were open during photography so he had the extra challenge: *how to side-step customers and balance being unobtrusive with making images.*



There's one image in particular photo that really stands out. It's a portrait of a big orange tabby named Lionel, who lives in a hobby shop. On first glance, you don't even see Lionel amidst the clutter of the shop's counter, but once you find him, you're caught in his steady gaze. There's a quality, that doesn't depend on photoshop tricks or a studio lighting set up that reminds me of a [Bernice Abbott](#) image. There's an honesty and simplicity in capturing this moment that's very appealing. *(You can see what I mean and meet Lionel on page 134.)*

**Shop Cats of New York is a hefty, gorgeously printed book by Harper Design. It's a page-turner that's guaranteed to delight cat-lovers of any age, and one of the best books about cats I've ever had the pleasure of reading.**

Until recently, Shop Cats was sold out, but thankfully the publisher has more in stock. You can grab a copy [HERE](#) before they sell out again.



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**If you'd like to win a Free AUTOGRAPHED copy of SCNY, simply leave a comment here on why you'd like to win. Most amusing comment, as judged by me, by Friday, January 13 (which would have been my daddy's 87th**

birthday) 2017 at 11:11 AM EST will win.



©2017 Robin AF Olson. Ms. Arslanian and Mr. Martilla.

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### Bonus Bit

I had the pleasure of attending a book signing of SCofNY at [MEOW Parlour](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, a cat café, some of whose cats are featured in the book. The café is clean and charmingly laid out, with doting caretakers and a few adoptable, adorable cats in residence. Two of the rescue-cats are siblings named [Fanny and Nicky](#), <sup>[5]</sup> who have CH (*cerebellar hypoplasia*). They also have a variety of cat-themed merchandise that was hard to resist (*I didn't. I got a really cute patch for my jacket.*).

MEOW Parlour partners with [KittyKind](#) <sup>[6]</sup> a terrific New York City based cat rescue. Their collaboration has helped find homes for over 100 cats to date.



©2017 Robin AF Olson. Nicky napping.



©2017 Robin AF Olson. Tamar has Cat!

*FTC Disclosure: I received a copy of this book from the publisher. Receiving the complimentary copy did not influence my review.*

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[1] <http://a.co/5wSpbOv>

[2] <http://ihavecat.com/>

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berenice\\_Abbott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berenice_Abbott)

[4] <http://www.meowparlour.com/>

[5] <http://kittykind.org/detail?id=2302>

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