

## Art's Amazing Act

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Art leapt about like this. Unknown internet jpeg.

Our unique, some might say ‘crazy’ method of picking a name for our black-striped tabby kitten went like this. My husband said, “Let’s name him after the first noun in the next paragraph.” He was sitting on the sofa reading a technical book and I joined him.

“Okay,” I said. I read over his shoulder and together we searched quickly, with anticipation. The next noun was ‘artifact,’ so that’s what we named him. Art for short, although many mistakenly thought his full name was Arthur. (My mother called him Arthur)

Art was an acrobatic wizard right from the beginning and his dare-devil antics showed up soon after we got him. When we’d sit in our small living room, he’d fly from the top of the sofa to the end table, to the arm chair, the rocker, leaping from one to the other. Round and round he’d go in a blur. I was convinced that he ricocheted off the walls in order to keep going.

Later, we temporarily moved into an apartment of a friend who was away while we looked for a house to rent. Our friend’s apartment had a balcony with a three-paw-wide concrete railing upon which Art performed a death-defying stunt. He trotted along the top of this railing. Back and forth he’d go. Not so death-defying until you realize that this railing was ten stories up. He’d leap on, teeter back and forth for a bit while we gasped. He couldn’t help looking down from this position. Did he know how high up he was? Then he’d turn, by some kind of mysterious little leap, and trot back the other way. We were extremely uneasy about this, but we trusted his instincts, until one morning we completely doubted them.

Our friend whose apartment we were occupying returned home, and we moved onto air mattresses and sleeping bags on the living room floor, facing the balcony sliding-glass doors. We could see a portion of the balcony from this vantage point. To Art’s great delight “morning” could start early because we were “right there” and he mewed to go out on the balcony to use his litter box and run the gauntlet. Lying there in our sleeping bags, I dozed off and on, but could watch him trot by, appear and disappear.

At one point I awoke and lay there watching, waiting for him to go by, but he didn’t. I nudged my husband. “Have you seen Art go by?”

“He’ll appear in a minute,” he said half asleep and rolled over. A few seconds later he roused himself and began watching, too.

Suddenly, without a word between us, we leapt out of our sleeping bags and dashed to the balcony. As more and more of it came into view, we became more and more agitated, and finally we were horrified, because Art was not out there. He wasn't in the litter box, he wasn't off to the left, nor was he off to the right.

A forlorn screech emitted from my throat. What options remained? Only a puddle of fur and bloody remains ten stories below. We both dashed towards the railing and peered over. To our great relief, he was not lying down there on the concrete. But where was he?

We began to look around, and only then did we realize that although there was a concrete wall to the left and to the right, for privacy, the three-paw-wide railing extended beyond the wall on the right side of the balcony, and was continuous with the next apartment's railing. We looked around the wall onto the neighbour's balcony. Still no Art, not on the railing, and not on the balcony. Then we noticed the open sliding-glass door. The curtains fluttered in the breeze. The apartment was vacant, probably being cleaned and aired.

"He must be in there," I said, with uncertainty and trepidation.

"Art," we called.

He appeared, trotting toward us, tail high in the air. He was having the time of his life. We were flooded with relief. But, in order to get to us he had to leap back up onto the railing. We held our breaths as he teetered in that precarious position before he turned toward us. We reached out and then he was in our arms. We were giddy from the shock of his adventure. I wanted to both hug him and scold him, but since he could never conceive of the trauma we'd experienced, he only got hugs and pets. He was quickly carried inside behind closed doors.

Happily, we'd found a house to rent, so this was Art's last amazing act — in this venue anyway. We never for a moment discounted the possibility of future episodes.



Our cat, Art  
Photo: Bob Kavanagh