A DREAM COME TRUE

Joan Weber

For years, I've wanted to have in my kitchen, whining at 7 in the morning for some Ocean Blend, a cat who was huge, almost stuffed, unearthly. I wanted this cat to look exactly like the cat of my dreams; your basic grinning Cheshire, one of your better T.S. Eliot cats—you know the kind. A cat that everybody would gasp at when it lay blinking FILLING the bathroom sink. That kind of cat. This cat wouldn't play with a ball or string; this cat's HEAD is bigger than any ball, (or to be slightly more accurate any ballplayer). I also wanted this cat to be yellow with a squished face so that I could easily categorize my friends. My closest friends would not say, "You've got a real Morris look-alike there!" My best friend said delicately that "he borders on the grotesque."

I have had this cat now for 10 years and he was created expressly to echo my dreams, walk through my art, my life. To achieve him, first you have to have him in your dreams from age 4 or 5 on; then you have to get over all the sentimentality connected with having any animal, which I do by having 6 other cats who are not icons. Then you have to find the RIGHT kind of cat who will gain huge amounts of weight and have a personality both unpleasant and arrogant so the question of "love" is truly suspended. I didn't want to be bothered with the SPCA (I belong to Actors and Others for Animals and contribute large sums of money to expiate any guilt) since I locked him in a bathroom for 2 months as a kitten with as much food as he wanted to START HIM OFF RIGHT IN LIFE.

Now what does he do in my dreams? Nothing. He never does anything in either my dreams or in real life. He LOOMS. He always appears in my dreams as distanced as Jack Nicholson was in The Passenger, and I assume he stands for Everyman, Everycat.

For years, I did work with images of dogs who looked violent yet impassive; I did a series on Seeing Eye Dogs that appeared endlessly in my dreams until I did them and to this day I don't know why except for the facile answer that I identified with them: leading the blind around.

The image of the contemporary cat is so sentimentalized that to make a serious work with one is walking a rather tenuous line, but the very OMNIPRESENCE of the "Fat Boy" as he's known around here, in dreams ranging from nightmares to your basic anxiety dreams, seems to call for some pictorial translation. His major flaw is that he's a one line joke; however, I certainly never get tired of looking at him, asleep or awake. Maybe he has to do with security; he certainly is consistent—consistently stupid, fat, demanding, and you guessed it, ALWAYS THERE. I'd say that this cat could be my mother or I could say that he keeps me thin—or most importantly, connected.
Even Larger than Wes Crockett, (detail), 1980. Joan Weber. 8½" × 15½", mixed media photo, color Xerox, sprays, etc.