

VCU alum's art installation tells story of two unique roommates

Also, they're cats

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"The Ballad of Kiki and Lucifer," a 16-piece art installation currently viewable at the Artspace gallery in Stratford Hills, follows the trials and tribulations of two cat roommates navigating through this thing we call life. The tale is told by their owner, local artist Dana Frostick, through acrylic paint and Sharpies.

Kiki is the calico cat, and the tabby cat is Lucifer — though they did not start with those names.

"He was Sunny. I got him home, I realized that was not an appropriate name for him, because he's prickly, you know?" Frostick said. "He's just kind of the devil incarnate."

It did not take long for Lucifer to get acquainted with Kiki, according to Frostick.

"We were cautious with them. Particularly, because she [Kiki] is so much smaller than him [Lucifer], but they assured us at the Richmond Animal Control that she would be okay because, as they put it, 'they used her to test out the dogs,'" Frostick said. "They would put her in a room with new dogs to see how they did with cats because she's not scared of anybody or anything. She's not aggressive, but she's definitely self-assured."

Each painting at Frostick's exhibition is taken from her photos, captured through layering paintings of the cats on top of each other.

The paintings show the feline friends in a dream-like environment. As they float through differing scenarios exploring life together, from the first time they met, to Lucifer showing Kiki the catnip hookup.

Frostick is known for her abstract style, and as she transitioned into representational art, she said that she found that cats are a good medium for conveying human emotions.

"Their expressions and their interactions are kind of universal for us animals," Frostick said. "There's the mild distrust, there's the acceptance, there's the kind of fun, there's a bit of anger here and there."

Frostick has been a member of Artspace — a nonprofit that has served as a venue and gallery for nearly four decades — since 2000, but she has been active in the local scene for far longer. Born and raised in Richmond, she attended VCU in the 1980s to study sculpture, which she said helped get her foot in the door of the art world, even though she did not graduate.

Artspace president Susan Cary praised Frostick's contributions to the gallery and said she has helped form and run the space over her 25 years of involvement.

"To be a part of Artspace means you're supporting the art community," Cary said. "She has supported so many artists over the years since Artspace has been opened. She drew me to Artspace."

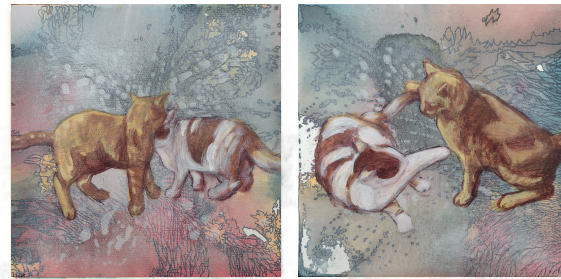
Artist Kathleen Westkaemper, Artspace's longest existing member, has known Frostick since she joined. Westkaemper said the whole community has witnessed the evolution of Frostick's art and recalls her journey from her first exhibition to now.

"She started doing the doodles, before that she was more realistic, and then she went very abstract, and now she's kind of combining the two and getting some elements of realism into it," Westkaemper said.

Viewers have enjoyed Frostick's compositions of the photos, according to Westkaemper. Many have commented on the lighting, colors and layering.

"The way the cats are layered and everything, the likenesses of their personalities and their being are captured," Westkaemper said. "She really knows these cats, and she loves them."

The Ballad of Kiki and Lucifer opened on Aug. 22 and will stay open until Sept. 20. Information on how to purchase artwork in the installation can be found on Frostick's website.



Artwork of Kiki and Lucifer at the Artspace Gallery. Photos by Kieran Stevens.

