

The Domestic and the Wild

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The artistic piece *Uba Tuba* by Michelle Dussault is very diverse with many elaborate features. *Uba Tuba* is comprised of mixed media of predatory cats found in the wild. It also comments on the typical household cat. The piece compares and contrasts the domestic cat to those found in the wild. Domestic cats are provided with the basics for life, such as food, shelter, and protection from predators. Wildcats, on the other hand, must fight for their means of survival, while in competition with the advances of humans. This provides for two very distinct environments.

Uba Tuba is composed of a painting and a visual display. The painting is framed in fake cat fur, and on the left side, there is a domestic cat watching water pour from a faucet in a kitchen window. This represents the indoor aspect of the painting and shows the environment of a typical household cat. On the right side of this piece, there is a collage of video clips projected into the piece that give a visual image of how predatory cats live in the wild. These clips show predatory animals, such as cheetahs, panthers, lions, and other wildcats working together to hunt down prey. There is also an audio narration that coincides with the visual clips. This provides an insight into how intelligent cats are and how predatory cats can lay traps for their prey.

In *Uba Tuba* the cat in the kitchen window represents the typical domestic cat. Household cats' needs are provided by their owners. Domestic cats have no reason to fear being eaten or killed by predatory animals, so they lack the thrill of the hunt and chase. These cats have either lost this instinct to hunt through domestication, or they have never had to use it. This has made cats become stagnant as shown in *Uba Tuba*, where the domestic housecat remains

motionless, and the predatory cats in the video clips are always moving. This also allows insight into how unchanging housecats' environment is. Housecats have become accustomed to lying around the house and not doing a thing. This is one reason why an ordinary household cat can be so amused by frivolous things, such as watching water run down a faucet. *Uba Tuba* shows the true nature of the average household cats and how their environment relies on the sole aspect of their human provider.

Wildcats such as tigers, lions, jaguars, and panthers have a very different environment compared to that of the domestic housecat. These cats grow up in the wild learning to fend for themselves. If they can't learn to do this, they die. *Uba Tuba* captures the intense nature of these wildcats with a display of video clips. These video clips illuminate how wildcats hunt in packs to better increase their survival.

Wildcats have no time to watch frivolous things such as a faucet running. Unlike the housecat's environment, the wildcat's habitat is always changing. They must adapt to changes such as arid weather and shortages of food or these cats will die. In *Uba Tuba* there is a narration of how these cats are in danger of going extinct. Many types of these predatory cats are now on the endangered list, such as the jaguar and the tiger. Unfortunately, many of these cats cannot adapt quick enough, however, to compete with human advances, poaching, or destruction of their natural habitats.

Even though domestic cats and wildcats are very diverse, they are also incredibly similar. For instance, they both share the family name Felidae and a common ancestor from which they evolved and diversified. Wildcats and domestic cats both love to play. Wildcats may play in a pond or with other cats where housecats may just play with a scratching post, a ball of yarn, or

just watch water flow from a faucet. Most wildcats and domestic cats are extremely agile, which helps them climb up trees, chase prey, or amuse themselves by chasing other things.

Domestic cats and wildcats are very similar but also diverse and *Uba Tuba* does a great representation of their differences by placing the housecats motionless and the predatory cats in moving video clips. This helps illustrate the typical life of housecats and wildcats. These cats can do extraordinary things and are fascinating to watch.