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The discreet catwalk for Swiss kitties

An object typical of Swiss residential areas, the cat ladder, is finally receiving the attention it deserves.



They are a typical yet overlooked urban development phenomenon – cat ladders in Swiss suburbia. Nowhere else on the planet do they discreetly blend into the urban landscape in such incredible numbers and wide-ranging designs. Cats are provided with an accessible link between roaming freely outdoors and the warmth of a human home with great architectural skill and craftsmanship: spiral staircases, narrow and perilously teetering bridges, climbing aids in artistically designed zigzag patterns and fur-covered miniature balconies screwed into house facades. However, despite the great number of artistic structures installed for cats, no research has been carried out into cat ladders as yet. That is now about to change. The author and graphic designer Brigitte Schuster is currently working on a reference book about cat ladders and the relationship between urban residents and their domestic pets. A whimsical project? Schuster is deadly serious. She is looking at cat ladders from a sociological, architectural and aesthetic perspective. Her exploration of the topic raises the question as to whether the ladders are ultimately more important to people than the animals. They highlight a person's need to provide the animal with access to the home. Cats would probably cope in everyday life without the climbing aids. Schuster's artistically produced book will be published in German and English at the start of 2019 but can be pre-ordered now. MARC LETTAU

brigitteschuster.com/swiss-cat-ladders



The research focuses on the case study of Berne. All the photos show cat ladders from districts in the federal capital.
 Photos: Brigitte Schuster

