

Featured Felines: Cat Statues and Memorials 2 (2020)

(page checked July 2026)

Tombili of Istanbul



Street cats are a part of life in Istanbul and have been for centuries. But rather than just being 'strays' and ignored, the human inhabitants accept them and mostly care for them. They are fed, their health issues are monitored and taken care of, and during the cold Turkish winters many individuals, NGOs and even some municipalities provide 'cat houses' on the streets or somewhere to sleep out of the cold.

Tombili – a name meaning 'chubby' and often applied to pets in Turkey – was one such cat, although she did in fact have a home; she frequented the Ziverbey neighbourhood in the Kadiköy district of the city for some 10 years and was much loved in the area, with her laid-back lifestyle making her a sort of unofficial mascot for her street. She had a favourite spot to relax on a stone bench on one of the streets, and her unique pose while sitting there watching the world go by was photographed and became an internet sensation, gaining her followers worldwide.

Tombili died in early August 2016 after a mystery illness lasting a month or so, according to her humans. She was much mourned and a petition was started, asking Kadiköy Municipality to officially commemorate her life, gaining thousands of signatures. Local sculptor Seval Sahin agreed to re-create her famous pose with a bronze sculpture, which was unveiled on World Animal Day, 4 October 2016. The Deputy Mayor attended, hundreds of people came to pay their respects and the event was covered on Turkish TV.

Only a month or so later the sculpture was stolen. There was a huge outcry on social media and from countries abroad as well as Turkey; it seems to have shamed the thieves into returning it and within a week it had been returned. Tombili is back in her rightful place on the street.





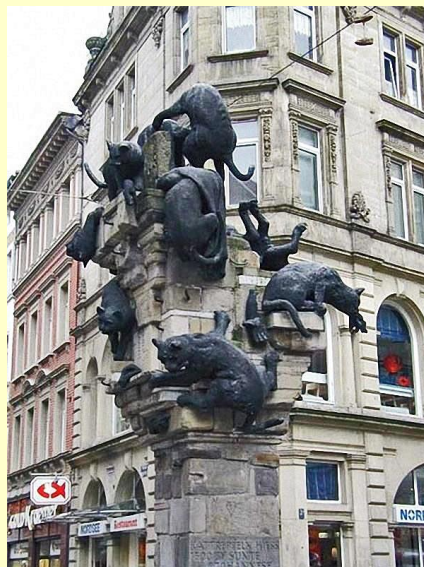
[Independent](#) (Oct. 2016 – archived copy) | [Story behind the statue](#) (March 2018)
There's a nice little short video about Istanbul cats [here](#).

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Homeless Cats Statue Braunschweig, Germany

I haven't been able to find out very much about this unusual statue, which was designed by sculptor Siegfried Neuenhausen and unveiled in 1981 in the north-central German city of Braunschweig (Brunswick in English). It's quite tall, and fixed to it in various realistic poses are a number of bronze cats. The statue is intended to draw attention to the plight of homeless cats in the city, and indeed in other cities where there is often a large number of stray felines.

How many cats are on the structure is quite hard to establish!



[Orange Smile](#) (undated)

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