

Louis Wain (5 August 1860 – 4 July 1939) was an English artist best known for his drawings, which consistently featured anthropomorphised large-eyed cats and kittens.

In 1886, Wain's first drawing of anthropomorphised cats was published in the Christmas issue of the Illustrated London News, titled "A Kittens' Christmas Party". The illustration depicted 150 cats, many of which resembled Peter, doing things such as sending invitations, holding a ball, playing games, and making speeches, spread over eleven panels. Still, the cats remain on all fours, unclothed, and without the variety of human-like expression that would characterize Wain's later work. Under the pseudonym of George Henri Thompson, he illustrated numerous books for children by Clifton Bingham published by Ernest Nister.

In subsequent years, Wain's cats began to walk upright, smile broadly and use other exaggerated facial expressions, and would wear sophisticated, contemporary clothing. Wain's illustrations showed cats playing musical instruments, serving tea, playing cards, fishing, smoking, and enjoying a night at the opera. Such anthropomorphic portrayals of animals were very popular in Victorian England and were often found in prints, on greeting cards and in satirical illustrations such as those of John Tenniel.

Wain was a prolific artist over the next thirty years, sometimes producing as many as several hundred drawings a year. He illustrated about one hundred children's books, and his work appeared in papers, journals, and magazines, including the Louis Wain Annual, which ran from 1901 to 1915. His work was also regularly reproduced on picture postcards, and these are highly sought after by collectors today. In 1898 and 1911 he was chairman of the National Cat Club.

Bethlem Museum of the Mind has 55 pieces of artwork for Louis Wain.

<https://museumofthemind.org.uk/collections/gallery/artists/louis-william-wain>

