

Painting for Ewe!

Sheep are not the subjects normally associated with art and what one aspires to hanging in the office or home. Some might say they lack individuality, preferring to follow rather than lead and don't have much sense of purpose (none of which apply to their creator). Yet artist, Ann Gadd, has turned these rambling ruminants into paintings that hang around the globe, from the remotest regions of South Korea, to New Zealand, Europe (or is that "Ewerope"), the UK and the USA.

Gus Silber in a recent article in Discovery magazine describes Ann's paintings as being: "... bright, bold, and witty, showing sheep prancing on hilltops ("Landscape"), or standing on top of one another ("More RAM") ..."

Leadership (or is that "Leadership") magazine described the works as being "in some ways reminiscent of the genius cartoonist, Gary Larson. But where as Larson's topics were oftentimes quirky for quirky's sake, Ann has much more to say. The popularity of Ann's "wacky" sheep in both art circles and the mainstream, speaks of her skill in putting complex concepts into simple



terms." (Zaid Kriell) But who is this sheep? **Blueprint** took the opportunity to ask her about her latest books, sheep, the meaning of life and earning a living as an artist.

So, Ann, why sheep? Humans are a bit like sheep really. Like sheep we seldom stop to question our lives and their purpose, we plod along focusing only on the next patch of grass and avoid seeing the bigger picture. I used to be a creative person in advertising and then I wrote about eight books as well, so combining words with art, seemed like a natural coming together of two interests. The sheep fit wonderfully, wickedly into the whole corporate jargon speak and then there is the play on the word ewe/you which is useful. A "ewe" is described in the dictionary as being a: "female sheep esp. when fully mature" which is probably an apt description of me!

How did you start painting sheep? Prior to my "sheep" series, I was an artist for roughly ten years, painting landscapes and still lives and creating more conceptual type art. When my husband's advertising agency had to close, I suddenly needed to turn a hobby into a career. Through the trauma of the experience, emerged these great little sheep, which sold almost as soon as I had painted them.

Pretty soon I was exporting them around the world. They hang now in a number of large offices, hotels, as homes from court to Benoit. This I am extremely grateful and am privileged to be able to do what I love doing and earn my income from doing so.



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– Ann Gadd

And your most favourite sheep painting? Hmm, it changes but “Obaama” certainly had the most response. “Creative Accounting,” and “The Diet” as well as “The C.E.O.” where the sheep balances precariously on top of a ladder and the wine related ones, such as “Aromatherapy for Ewe,” are also ones I enjoyed doing.

And the books? (Recently Ann pub-

lished two further books relating to sheep. The first book was called “Life with Ewe,” was also printed by Creda and has since sold out. Then this year I brought out “The New Ewe,” which features about 80 of my paintings.)

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“The Ambitious Sheep,” combines my self-help writing (six books published) with the sheep. It’s an allegory about three sheep who have a goal, (which can be anything that inspires you, be it – physical, work-related or spiritual), which they want to achieve. The book sets about, through their amusing exploits, to reveal a way of achieving what you desire through personal integrity. There are many plays on words, etc so the book is hopefully light yet contains profound ancient truths. I wanted to create a simple methodology for making our desires and inspirations a reality. I hope the book achieves that and, as The Cape Times put it in their review, you can read it in about the time it takes you to get to your office in the lift! An exaggeration, but why say more when less has greater power? The same simplicity applies to the paintings.

CEO of Telesure, Leon Vermaak, described the book as: “Probably the most concise and memorable journey

through the maze of self-help books out there, it offers humorous, yet powerful inspiration to take control of your life and achieve success.”

How do you think up the ideas for all the paintings? They pop into my head while listening to the radio, waiting to collect the kids from school or reading the newspaper. Often I’m asked to create works related to spe-

cific business which is a further challenge. Right now I’ve just been working on ideas for a local educational company, as well as a doctor’s waiting room in Beverly Hills, L.A. It’s never a dull day at the office, as they say!

I gather that very few artists in South Africa are able to earn a living from their art. Is that true? Yes, sadly. We are not really a nation of art lovers and so much of the investment into art, comes from overseas rather than local

patrons. It can be extremely hard to break into the art world and get your work into galleries. However, it’s also about quality of life. I may not drive the latest 4x4 and live in luxury, but as a lifestyle you can’t beat it – no traffic, “Bored Meetings,” “Corporate Mergers” and being fleeced by suppliers counts for a lot of \$\$\$. (Although I do stress over the “Stockmarket!”) I have recently completed a book, on making a living through art in South Africa.

You were successful in the business world. How did you make the transition from corporate to creative? With great ease! Art and writing have always been my passions. I just needed something or someone to shove me out of my comfort zone (security) and follow my dream. Rejection as a writer and artist is part of the growth process, but I came to understand it as being steps on the road to success. Having lived in the corporate world allows me now to examine it in my work with a greater depth of understanding. ■

To see more of Ann’s work, log onto www.artforewe.co.za

