

South African artists are increasingly viewed as a good long term investment. One, in particular, sets out to make "ewe" smile while others are promoting talented folk internationally.

SA SHEEP AND FINE ART



Wokaba Mutheti

While culture is often described as the collective personality of a nation, art is its collective dream-life. And much like our dreams, it has many facets. An artwork can impact deeply on our emotions, make us happy, strike a chord for a justice issue or make us laugh. As does Ann Gadd's *Ewe/You* series, much loved by businessmen and politicians alike.

Ann, a prolific author and artist, sells more than 800 paintings a year and has an international client list to die for. She recently released *Ewe at Work: Sheep*

get down to business, a pocket sized collection of paintings that is an excellent anti-depressant.

Her work is to be found in galleries locally, in New Zealand and the UK as well as in collections worldwide. And such is the popularity of her *Sheep* series, she may arguably be South Africa's best selling female artist.

In her early years as an artist she painted mostly landscapes and still life in bright expressionist colours. Then in 2002 she created "The sheep who



Painting of skills development.

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studied astrology". It sold, so later that year she painted a couple of versions of "ambitious sheep". They also sold, but she confesses to not giving sheep much thought until four years later when she hit the creative doldrums.

As she recalls: "Nothing seemed to work anymore and I felt like stopping painting altogether. I seemed stuck creatively and did not know where to head. With two children to support and the usual bonds etc, the financial pressure was uncomfortable.

"It was a freezing day, rain pouring down, and I was in the garage, which I used as a studio. I kept hearing this inner voice saying paint sheep, paint sheep, and I'm like 'yeah right people are going to want paintings of sheep!' I decided what the hell, and so painted my first two sheep and took them to a well-known

art dealer who loved them. I did seven more and took them to another gallery, which snapped them up. Four days later they called and asked for more. Over 2 000 sheep later the rest, as they say, is history."

Nice work if ewe can get it.

Another artist doing SA painting is Anthony Wakaba Mutheki. Tony was born in Kenya and as an SA citizen for some years, has received international acclaim for his paintings. He has collaborated with Nelson Mandela on art at an international level and now heads up Art Investments, which mentors disadvantaged artists from all communities to create a sustainable lifestyle for them and to promote investment in great South African art. Notably, sales at a recent cocktail party yielded more than R100 000. ■■■



SHEEP WORLDWIDE

Often commissioned for a specific personality, politician or corporate leader, Ann Gadd's humorous sheep paintings are owned by clients as diverse as Datuk Vinod Sekhar of the Petra Group, Malaysia; the Absolute Hotel, Limerick, Ireland; AngloGold Ashanti Ltd; The Incredible Chocolate Company (Australia) and the CEO of the London Stock Exchange.