



Above: Leopard; 56 x 70 cm; graphite
(photo reference: Graeme Mitchley)

Right: Aah! No more post!; 7 x 5 cm; graphite

mighty miniatures

Johannesburg-based Karyn Bell (who paints under her maiden name of Wiggill), has a Bachelor of Social Science degree and started drawing at an early age. She has no formal art education and is mainly self-taught. A member of the Miniature Art Society of South Africa (MASSA), the Botanical Artists Association of Southern Africa (BAASA) and Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors & Engravers, she has won numerous awards and accreditations locally and internationally and has had her drawings featured in international publications.

For the Investec Cape Town Art Fair 2019, she partnered with Investec to create a collection of tiny drawings that fitted into a little red dot. The 52 miniature artworks (each only 16mm in diameter), were on display



on the Investec wall at the walkabout meeting point, for all visitors to take a closer look, using a magnifying glass and Investec's go-to guide on the art of buying art. "Working with a magnifier is not necessarily a requirement, but it definitely assists dramatically in capturing the detail," explains Karyn. "For this project, I used a head magnifier with a 2.3 times magnification, as the drawings were significantly smaller than normal miniatures. I worked under a special daylight fluorescent light, even during the day. Each drawing took approximately nine hours, but this depended on the subject and the amount of detail. A portrait or complex subject matter may have taken longer."

Karyn usually works on 300g hot-pressed acid-free paper, which is smooth enough for fine drawings and paintings, watercolour pencils and oils. Her preferred graphite medium is the Faber-Castell 9000 series. "For the Investec project the red dots were only 16mm in diameter, and I quickly discovered that to create a painting, coloured pencils would not be sharp enough. I didn't want to use pure watercolours as I felt I wouldn't have enough control. I, therefore, tried watercolour pencils and made a painting medium by mixing the pigment, which I coloured onto a separate card and mixed with a tiny amount of water. I drew the circle with a stencil, then did the complete drawing using an 8h pencil (which needed to be as sharp as possible, and the harder the pencil, the better). Once the drawing was complete, I started with an Indigo colour for the darks (using an indigo watercolour pencil mixed with water). After the darks, different colour reds were used to complete the painting. Due to the size, I had to use a headset magnifier. I used various small paintbrushes, the smallest one is 5 zeros."

She enters exhibitions, both locally and internationally, and has obtained her full membership of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Engravers, in the UK. "I have received numerous awards in the UK, USA and locally. I have been published in two American books: 'Strokes of Genius 5: Composition' and 'Art Journey Animals: A collection of Inspiring Contemporary Masterworks' both published by North Light Books. I am also featured in Lynda Murray's 'Who's Who in Art'."

Promotion of her work is done through her own website, and she is active on both Facebook and Instagram.

Top left: Little Miss Muffet; 7 x 5 cm; graphite

Left: Mischief; 9 x 5 cm; graphite

Below left: Kingfisher; 27 x 18 cm; graphite ('Strokes of Genius 5')

Below centre: Gorge-ous; 20 x 20 cm; oil on canvas

Below right: Patience; 20 x 20 cm; oil on canvas



Above: Enos; 46 x 35 cm graphite on smooth canvas

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