



How do you get your ideas?

by Roxie Munro

I remember how I got the idea for my first children's book.

I had just sold my first cover to *The New Yorker* and moved to New York City. Looking for additional work, I thought I'd try jacket covers for adult books. One art director suggested a children's book editor, Donna Brooks. I went in for an appointment but cautioned, "I don't do cute, I don't do bunnies and bears," but she said, "I think you have something to offer children. If you get an idea, give me a call."

Each day I spent hours exploring the city, keeping my mind and eyes open for painting ideas. I loved the man-made mountains, the multiple windows creating fascinating patterns, and marveled at the complexity of the city. A week after the meeting, I woke up at 7a.m. Before I opened my eyes, I saw in red letters against the black of sleep the following words: *The Inside-Outside Book of New York City*. I called her, and said, "I have a weird title for a book." She said, "Come in; let's talk about it."

I knew little about making books - didn't know what the gutter was, knew nothing about the concept of page-turn. The idea of the book: you first see a place from the outside, and then the inside, or maybe looking back outside from a certain perspective. It went on to win the *New York Times* Best Illustrated Award and was a *TIME Magazine* Best Book of the Year for Children.

In 1981 I had moved to NYC, living in a sublet loft in Chelsea, immediately after *The New Yorker* magazine bought the first cover. The previous decade I lived in Washington, DC, doing editorial illustration for the Associated Press and the *Washington Post*, showed paintings in a good gallery, and had a fun freelance career as a television courtroom artist, which, incidentally, is great training for life drawing, working under pressure, making deadlines, not getting too precious, and concentrating in weird environments.

Now in New York, over the next few years, I did more *Inside-Outside* books - on Washington DC, London, Paris, American Libraries, and Texas. I also did a book on blimps, *Christmastime in New York City*, and have illustrated four nonfiction biographies written by my husband, Bo Zaunders.



5th Avenue at East 26th Street

Colored inks on Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol



LIC Snow - view from the roof of my studio building
Colored inks on Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol

One day at an elementary school visit in Connecticut, a 4th grade boy asked me about the Flatiron Building in the *Inside-Outside Book of NYC*. I started to talk about the full-page image in the book. "No," he said, "I mean the other Flatiron Building."

I realized he meant the one in the gutter of the title pages, where you see the whole lower half of Manhattan spread out - the Flatiron is maybe an inch high, amid a thousand other buildings. I have never forgotten that - how children see the details. It influences the way I compose, and often his words come back to me. In a conversation later with the elementary school librarians, I mentioned the boy's comments. They said, that, given my love of detail and pattern, I should do something like *Where's Waldo*. I dismissed it though - I don't do cartoon-y work, and what idea did I have for it?

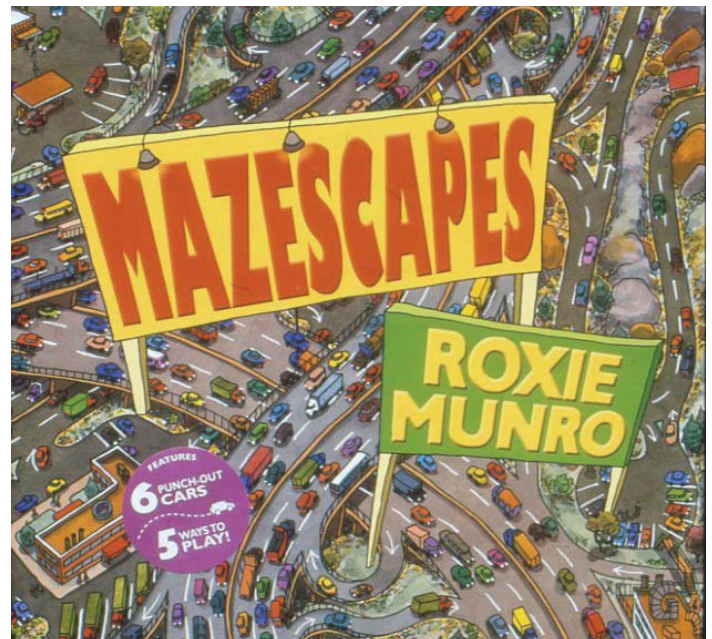
A few years ago though, I started thinking about how a book based upon a maze could work. First I had a maze going from page to page to the end of the book. One day, working on the path, and rechecking it, I found that if one took a certain wrong turn, you looped back again. So, I did it at the end, and looped back to the beginning - so you travel all of the way through the book, and then return to the starting point via a different path. I didn't want it to be schematic or cartoon-like, like so many of the paperback activity books, but more real, illustrative. Remembering how many children, including myself as a child, pore over intricate imagery, I wanted each detail to be different - not a formula. And it fulfilled my love of pattern, detail, rich color.

In *Mazescapes* one travels over a series of landscapes. Each is different and represents an idea, like "Town," "Factories," "Park," and so forth. You traverse connected mazes, to the end, and return to the beginning on a different path. Besides finding hidden ABCs there are other game elements in it - count the fishermen, school buses, dog-walkers, find the family car.

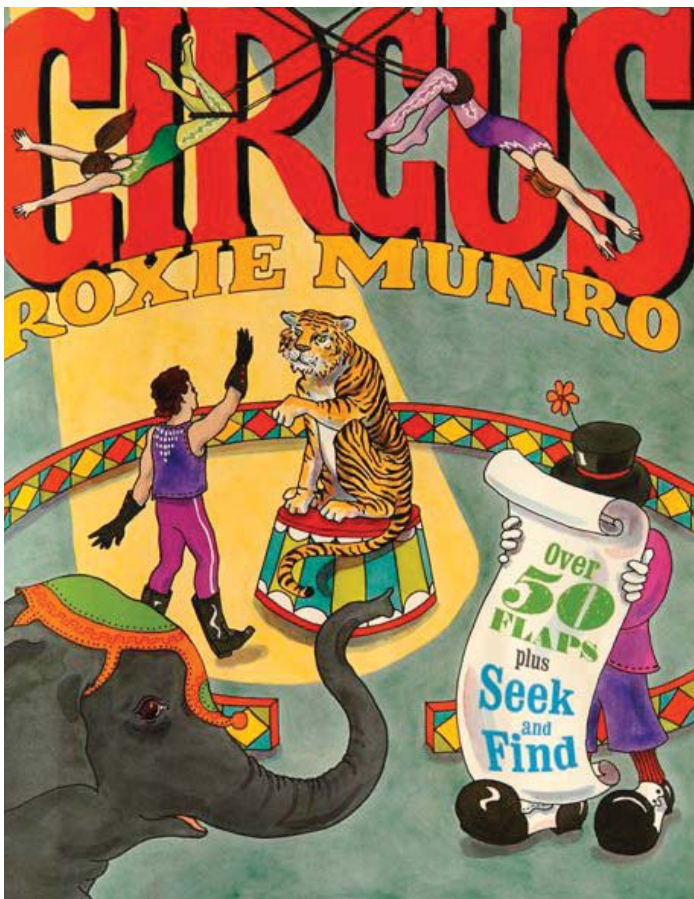
Mazescapes was one of my best-selling books. It was published in four languages, got a starred review in *School Library Journal*, and was a selection for the Children's Book of the Month Club.

I had an idea called *Doors*, developing out of the *Inside-Outside* books. My editor looked at the simple dummy, and said, "There are two ways you may consider doing this ... a format similar to the *Inside-Outside* books, a big spread and then turn the page to see what was behind it, or something more interactive."

Thirty minutes hearing after her word - "interactive" - I had created a tiny 2" x 3" dummy with taped-on doors opening - a lift-the-flap idea. We developed it further with flaps behind flaps, and also used the finding/naming elements. After *Doors* I created a lift-the-flap fold-out counting/finding book called *Circus* (October 2006).



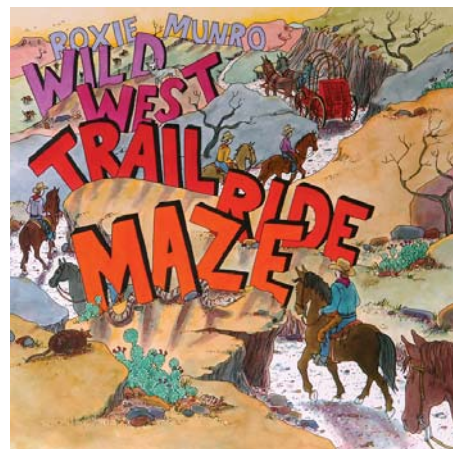
Mazescapes cover
Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol



Circus cover

Colored inks on Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol

I adore working on maze and counting/finding books, so I created a sequel to *Mazes*, called *Amazement Park* (Chronicle). Here, again, you go through 12 interconnecting mazes, and then work your way back on a different path. After *Amazement Park*, I did another finding/counting book for a small Texas publisher, Bright Sky Press. *Ranch* evolves slowly from the outside in, and suddenly back out again. As Book Links mentioned about *Mazes*, finding/counting, naming elements helps children with visual discrimination and concentration as well as vocabulary. The “Wild West Walk,” in *Amazement Park* kicked in an idea for the next book. A combination of *Ranch* and the maze books, *Wild West Trail Ride Maze* also starts at the beginning, ranch headquarters, and goes through through canyons and prairies and forests and lakes to the cattle round-up and overnight camp, and then returns via a different path. It's also an ABC book with hidden letters on each page, starting with A and winding up with Z, and seek-and-find elements.

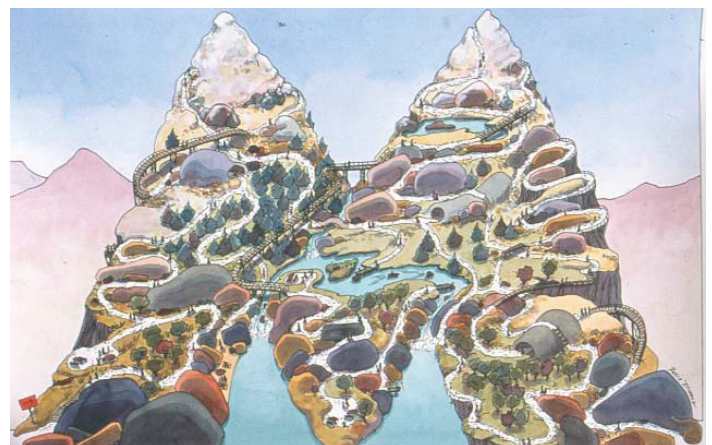


Wild West Trail Ride Maze cover

Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol

A couple years ago, the Children's Book Council invited me, and other children's book artists, to illustrate a letter of the alphabet for an American Library Association Convention auction. I immediately got an idea: an M for Maze Mountain - create a maze, on a double-peaked mountain, making an M. I was so excited I stopped everything, worked it out, and then executed it in about four days.

Right then I started thinking about an ABC Maze book. Every evening, after working on *Wild West Trail Ride* and *Circus*, which I was finishing simultaneously, I'd stop early and spend some time on a particular letter. I had a little 5" x 7" clipboard with blank paper, and would continue working on the letter on the #6 subway home. This book, *Mazeways: From A to Z* will be published by Sterling in 2007.



“M” is for Maze Mountain, created for the ALA/CBC Auction

Colored inks on Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol

Regarding materials, I first work in pencil on sketch paper, and then, using a lightbox, draw in ink on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol. Next I paint in the undertones and shadows, and finally the hues, with colored inks. Unlike some illustrators, who experiment with materials, I prefer to know my media well, and trust it, so that experimentation can come in the ideas and execution.



“K” is for Kitchen from *Mazeways: From A to Z*
Colored inks on Strathmore 500 Series Vellum Bristol

So, a creation doesn't come out of whole cloth but develops in a sort of logical way out of previous work - none of these books would come into being without the earlier *Inside-Outside* books, *Doors*, or *Mazescapes*. Many artist's work evolves in this way...you go through the processes, pay your dues, and you graduate into ideas. Creativity doesn't always come on demand - often ideas happen and problems are solved after you have been thinking about or playing with concepts for some time. Ideas don't just pop into your mind without being nurtured along the way in other ways, consciously or not.

It is in a way the culmination, a pulling together, of other ideas explored in one's work - a progression. Each creation builds upon the ones that have gone before. The *aha!*, the idea, is almost an end, as well as a beginning

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Roxie Munro

The author/illustrator of 30 books for children, Roxie Munro is also a *New Yorker* magazine cover artist, and an internationally exhibited painter. She is the author/illustrator of the acclaimed *Inside-Outside* series (*The Inside-Outside Book of New York City* won a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Award). Recent books include *Mazescapes*, *Amazement Park*, *Ranch*, *Doors*, *The Great Bridge-Building Contest*, and *Gargoyles, Girders & Glass Houses: Magnificent Master Builders* (the last two written by Bo Zaunders), *Circus*, *Mazeways: From A to Z* (2007), *Texas Rangers* (2007), and *Rodeo* (2007).

She studied at the University of Maryland, University of Hawaii (BFA in Painting), Ohio University (Graduate School), and received a Yaddo Fellowship in Painting. After college, Ms. Munro lived in Washington, DC and worked as a television courtroom artist for CBS, the Associated Press, and the *Washington Post*. In 1980 she moved to New York City, and began illustrating *New Yorker* covers and children's books.

Ms. Munro has exhibited her art in many galleries and museums, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC; the High Museum, Atlanta; and the Detroit Museum of Art, and has work in numerous private and public collections, including the Delaware Art Museum; Banco-Italia (Milan, Italy); Carnegie Hall; Pfizer; Unilever; New York University; National Museum of Women in the Arts; and the Zimmerli Museum (Rutgers University).

Roxie has given presentations at numerous conventions, libraries, and schools throughout the U.S., including the American Library Association, the Miami Book Fair, and the Texas Book Festival. Every summer she teaches a Watercolor Workshop in Lake Como, Italy, and has taught watercolor on the QEII, the Queen Mary II, and other ships.

Ms. Munro works in a sky-lighted loft studio just across the East River from her Murray Hill home in midtown Manhattan where she lives with her Swedish writer/photographer husband, Bo Zaunders.

Visit her website at www.roxiemunro.com

Nature Inspires Artists and Artist Papers

Many of your customers probably saw the recent headlines: 2005 was the hottest year ever recorded. The news raised the specter of global warming again, and reminded many of us that we can have a significant impact on the planet we call home.

Artists and creative consumers are often particularly sensitive to this message, since the natural world provides them inspiration as well as the raw materials with which they work.

Such concerns can lead to some conflicted feelings about the use of artist paper. Even though many artists commit their finest, finished work to sheet made from 100% cotton fiber, others use archival-quality paper made from alpha cellulose processed from trees. Either way, for many artists, the creative process often evolves on paper made from wood pulp.

So don't be surprised to find yourself fielding questions about more ecologically sensitive alternatives, such as artist paper that incorporates recycled content or that derives from more environmentally friendly manufacturing processes.

Fortunately, such alternative products have become increasingly available and of higher quality over the past several decades, although there are caveats.

For example, not all recycled paper is created the same. The EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for most recycled paper products recommend they contain a minimum of 30% post-consumer waste. The thing to emphasize here is "post-consumer." A "recycled" label may simply indicate that the paper was made from pre-consumer scraps, such as cuttings and loose ends from the mill. Conversely, paper made from post-consumer waste actually reuses material diverted from the waste stream – things like used corrugated boxes, old newspapers, magazines, junk mail and mixed waste paper.

Another important thing to emphasize is that recycled paper is not necessarily inferior to virgin paper, or unworthy of serious artwork. Such misconceptions can lose sales,

and it's up to retailers to educate their customers about the quality and value of artist papers constructed from recycled content.

Case in point: Strathmore Artist Papers' most popular sketch pad – the 400 Series Recycled Sketch – comprises heavyweight paper that contains 30% post-consumer fiber. Our 400 Series Drawing pads and Artagain™ pads offer similarly recycled sheets. All of these products share the same uncompromising quality, functionality and appearance as our other fine artist papers.

A New Wind Blowing

The popularity of our recycled products is no coincidence. It underscores the fact that, given a choice, the artistic community will actively select more environmentally sensitive products to work with. This message hasn't been lost on Strathmore Artist Papers™.

Last year, we launched three new artist papers products under our Windpower™ Series, all of them manufactured with windpower – a pollution free, renewable energy resource.



Compared to conventional energy sources, wind farms pose a lower impact on wildlife and the ecosystem. Plus, their lower footprint allows for multiple uses of the same land, and can provide alternative sources of income for family farmers and rural landowners.

Through the use of wind generated power and recycled fiber, the mill that manufactures Strathmore's Windpower™ products has calculated that they generate the following environmental savings each year:

13 million fewer pounds of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides emitted into the air we breathe,

8,581 fewer barrels of crude oil, or

1,960 tons of anthracite coal burned, or

14.6 million fewer miles driven, or

885,000 newly planted trees each year.

In addition to their lighter environmental impact, the three new Windpower™ products offer outstanding functionality and performance. The list of products includes:

- Windpower™ Sketch pads of 60 lb. (89 gsm), acid free paper, lightly textured surface that works well with any dry media
- Windpower™ Drawing pads of 80 lb. acid free paper that is excellent for producing finished works of art in pencil, pen, charcoal or pastel
- Windpower™ Bristol pads of 100 lb. bristol weight board, available in a vellum surface that makes a superb candidate for pencil, pen, charcoal and pastel, along with a smooth surface that is good for pen and ink

Windpower products not only reduce the use of fossil fuels, they also contribute less to the wastepaper stream. More specifically, the Windpower™ Sketch and Drawing paper both include 30% post-consumer recycled content. Like Strathmore's other recycled artist papers, our products with the Windpower™ label are extremely durable, enabling multiple clean erasures of dry media, and even light washes without feather or bleed through.

The Windpower™ Series is a continuation of Strathmore's long tradition of environmental stewardship, which reaches back to 1972 when we pioneered the practice of using recycled content to make high quality sketch pads. We are proud to continue this tradition of giving back to nature for all the inspiration and raw materials it has provided Strathmore Artist Papers™ and its customers in the artistic world.

Featured Product

Strathmore Artist Papers™ introduces a **new Black Presentation Board!**

Perfect for business presentations, school projects, mounting photographs or artwork. This strong 55 pt, rigid board has solid color throughout the board. Available in 20" x 30", it is acid free and has a slightly textured surface. The board will accept glue, adhesive backed letters and adhesive sprays.

However, materials should not be repositioned once they are adhered to the surface. Sheet cuts clean with a blade. Display your presentations in style!

