

Special Interview with Artist/Author Roxie Munro

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/special-interview-artistauthor-roxie-munro/>

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- Special Interview with Artist/Author Roxie Munro

Roxie Munro has to be one of the coolest people on the planet.

Roxie travels all around the globe giving presentations and inspiring talks about writing, illustrating and educating. Her artwork is in magazines, in galleries and in over 40 children's books.

Plus, she's creating book apps.

It's my great pleasure to present this interview with Roxie Munro. We haven't met (yet), but I have to admit it: I'm a fan.

Introducing Roxie Munro

If the project is nonfiction and interactive, chances are good that a publisher might contact Roxie Munro to do it. After all, her artwork and her writing abilities are in demand. Even though Roxie is unquestionably an artist, I would describe her as someone with both feet firmly on the ground.

Roxie isn't into shoes at all, nevermind that she lives in New York. She says simply, "Not into shoes. Anything relatively comfortable, black, and not too nerdy will do." Her favorite food is the homemade

gravlax made by Bo Zaunders, her Swedish husband. [[Here's his recipe!](#)] She likes margaritas and the Scottish Highlands and wishes there were more colors. "I love all colors. I wish there were more colors."

About facing challenges in her work, Roxie says, "It doesn't get easier, but you learn how to correct mistakes better. Each book is different and has its own challenges." (I don't know about you, but I find this really inspiring.)

Roxie Munro has over 40 (and counting) nonfiction and [concept](#) illustrated books on the market, with several novelty-type projects like [lift-the-flap books](#) and books that are serialized (i.e. the [Inside Out](#) series). Amazingly, she doesn't have an agent (though she does work with agents).

So it was incredible being able to ask Roxie some questions about how she does what she does. All I can say is: read and learn!

Roxie on Being an Artist

Chazda: When did you know for certain that you wanted to be a professional illustrator? What was the turning point?

Roxie: From the age six I was the "class artist." My older sister, [Ann Munro Wood](#), is a wonderful artist – she was on a TV talent show as a child. We were taken to museums before we could walk. At college I briefly majored in chemistry, but went into art in my sophomore year. I have never had a job!

Right out of grad school I began freelancing – doing a mix of creative work, from fine art painting to designing clothes (making and selling to boutiques), and started editorial freelancing for the [Associated Press](#) and the [Washington Post](#), then as a TV courtroom artist (I lived in Washington DC for ten years after graduate school).

Later, I moved to New York City, did covers for [The New Yorker magazine](#) and then started doing children's books.

[[GO HERE to see a slideshow of The New Yorker magazine covers she created. They're incredible.](#)]

C: Which do you prefer – creating artwork for a series or doing stand-alone books?

R: I like them both – have done six books in the [Inside-Outside series](#), four lift-the-flap paper-engineered books, at least three nature books, six maze books...I like to do work in a series, because one idea often stimulates another in the same genre.

Rarely am I offered multi-book contracts. I usually pitch the next idea in the series as a separate book.

C: What inspires you most to get going on a next project?

R: Often one book leads to another... for example, in **Mazeways: A to Z** I did a page named *J is for Jungle*. That gave me the idea to do a rainforest maze, which kicked in the next book, **EcoMazes: 12 Earth Adventures**.

Other times, I'll just start thinking about something, and it develops into a book idea, like the lift-the-flap book "Doors" or the first maze book, **Mazescapers**. And sometimes an editor will suggest something, like **Inside-Outside Dinosaurs**.

C: You've been published by a wide variety of storybook publishers: Two Lions, Puffin, Holiday House, Sterling, Wiley, Dutton, Bright Sky Press and Arbor House. Has your experience in working with these different companies been wildly different or do they follow a pattern?

R: Basically, traditional publishing follows a similar industry pattern. The first ten years I worked mainly with one editor, to whom I was very loyal. When she left the business I started working with others. But the way we work together, and the professional roles within the companies (editors, art directors, production, marketing and publicity, etc.), are remarkably similar, as is the acquisition process.

Roxie on Book Apps

C: You've created 3 book apps, including a 3D animated interactive app. How did you get into that – and do you like it? How is working towards an app as the end product different (or similar) from creating for a physical book?

R: About ten years ago a dad named [Omar Curiere](#) in the Netherlands wrote me a fan letter about my maze books on behalf of his then 6-year-old son. Omar owned a graphics company doing virtual reality video work for architects, real estate firms, and city planners. He saw the future, and wanted to get into apps (creating a new division called OCG Studios).

He thought my maze books would be perfect, and in 2010 contacted me. My print books are considered interactive: seek-n-find, guessing games, mazes, counting, hidden ABCs and numbers, and lift-the-flap paper-engineering. It seemed to us that the interactive concepts inherent in my books, and even my art style would be ideal (I draw with black lines, which are easier to animate than a more "painterly" look). I was thrilled, and ready to embrace new technology.

Although one of my apps is adapted from a print book (**Doors**), an app is not the same as a book. It doesn't have to be linear. It can have sounds, animations, embedded videos, voice-over, all sorts of bells and whistles...so it is a different animal. Many of my books use a form of "gamification" to convey nonfiction content and, as mentioned, are inherently interactive - so to progress into making apps was a logical step.

C: You've collaborated with a couple of authors in the past, editors. Is there anyone you love to work with in particular?

R: I like to collaborate with my app developer folks on apps, and on some creative projects, but basically prefer to work alone on books, except for the occasional input of an editor and/or art director. I have illustrated a few nonfiction books for others, although I prefer to both write and illustrate.

I've done four biography books with my writer husband, [Bo Zaunders](#) – that was a lot of fun!

C: You are so prolific; it's really amazing to me. I could not find any mention of an agent who

represents you – so it seems you don’t have one! (Is that right?) How do you do what you do?

R: When I began in the business there were few agents specializing in children’s books. Now there are many, and are pretty necessary for writers and/or illustrators. But I have established relationships through the years with editors and publishers, so I don’t need an agent to be able to submit.

That said, I am working with two agents right now on possible one-off projects.

Roxie on iNK Think Tank

C: You’re a member of [iNK Think Tank](#). Can you talk about that a bit? Have you ever gotten to meet with these other authors?

R: InkThinkTank is a group of about three-dozen award-winning nonfiction authors. You have to have had at least five books published and be invited to join. I am now good buddies with the founder, Vicki Cobb, and have met at least a dozen of my fellow iNKers.

Most of us also contribute to the Nonfiction Minute, a cool new resource for teachers and librarians – a fresh new “minute” is available free each day of the school year. It’s a 400-word text on a fun nonfiction subject (like the first black woman aviator, esoteric political stuff, neat facts about smell or taste, how Halloween came to be, quirky scientific facts, etc), plus an audio file of the piece read by the author. And there are visuals – illustrations, photos, or maybe a video to enhance the content.

Many iNKers also do AOC – Authors on Call, a sophisticated form of Skyping, interacting with school classes – basically live video school visits.

C: Which of your books so far is your favorite project – and why?

R: I think **Mazescapes** was a breakthrough book – I’ve done six maze books now, three maze apps, and some other fun maze projects, like a giant maze for a cool new product, [KIWi \(Kids Interactive Walk-in\) Storybooks](#).

C: You present at a lot of different events. Can you talk about your favorite? Where can people meet you?

R: I enjoyed speaking last year at the 4th Annual [TRT Children’s Conference in Istanbul](#), which is a beautiful city. Met some great international speakers who are very motivated, concerned, and interested in children’s literature. I also speak at schools, libraries, SCBWI events, conferences etc... my schedule is kept updated on my website.

If you are in NYC, let me know and maybe we can arrange a studio visit. [Yay! Yes please.]

C: Tell me about KidLit TV and your experience there.

R: [KidLit TV](#) is a great new resource for children’s book authors and illustrators, librarians, teachers, parents, and kids. Lots of my author friends have done interviews, as have I. [You can [watch Roxie’s](#)

[KidLit TV interview with Rocco Staino HERE.](#)] Also have two demos for kids called “[How to Draw an Owl](#)” and “[How to Draw a Random Roxie Reversing Maze.](#)”

Roxie Munro and Julie Gribble on set for KidLitTV.

C: What is the thing you are most proud of with your books and apps?

R: That I’m not afraid to do something different (say, gamification) with nonfiction...

Roxie’s Awesome Studio

C: Please describe your amazing workspace, and also where you write and edit your stories. Do you sometimes work on a project outside of your studio?

R: My studio is in a 1930s 3-story building in Long Island City, across the East River from my home in midtown Manhattan in New York. It used to be Helena Rubenstein’s makeup factory – good karma for painters? There are about 30 artists here, and many more in nearby buildings. I have the only skylight (there are more pix on my website).

Sometimes I take a project with me when I travel...in November I’m speaking at the SCBWI British Isles Conference, and am bringing some work I’ll prepare ahead of time for a week stay by the English Channel, after the Conference. In late November in England, it may be dark and rainy, so it’ll be cozy to work inside. I really like to have a project to work on if I spend any time in one place when I travel. Too boring to sit on a beach, or just visit tourist places.

Roxie’s Next Book

C: Can you talk about your next project?

R: I have a book with [Holiday House](#), on art, due out fall 2017. My last book for them was **Market Maze**, about where food comes from. There are several potential projects in the works...most not committed yet!

C: Who would you say has been your greatest inspiration in life (not just in art)?

R: Maybe my mom. Strong, extra smart, creative, active. My dad. An excellent designer and craftsman; he told us, “Do what you love,” which gave me confidence to pursue my dreams. Both were great readers and art appreciators, and had high integrity. Both encouraged me to go into art - this with one other child who was already an artist!

C: Your work is also published in and on magazines for adults and is shown in galleries and private collections. Does this give you the same satisfaction as creating a book for kids or is it just completely different?

R: Each unique. Painting fine art uses a different kind of creativity, and, I think, a different part of the

brain. [Painting in oil](#) helps and extends one's use and experimentation in color. I use colored inks for most illustration work.

I like to do both – one is a relief from the other.

Most oil paintings are finished in a month or two; books are long-term projects, usually at least a year. I never work on both at once – maybe two or three months doing oils, then I may launch into a book for the rest of the year. The primary gallery for my oils is in Provincetown, MA – the very cool [Simie Maryles Gallery](#) on Commercial Street.

C: If you could read one of your books to any particular person in the world (living or dead), who would it be?

R: That's tough. Maybe my husband's dad who lived in southern Sweden. He died before I could meet him, but he so loved books and art, and would have appreciated it that his son married an author and artist.

Great Links to Follow

[Roxie's Main Website](#)

[About Roxie's Apps](#)

[Doors trailer \(60 seconds\)](#)

[Maze trailer \(60 seconds\)](#)

[Books published w/Bo](#)

[Ink Think Tank](#)

[The Nonfiction Minute](#)

[KIWiStorybooks](#)

[Roxie Munro's Schedule](#)

[About Roxie's Studio](#)

Keep creating, no matter what.

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[<< Interview with Non-fiction Illustrator Konrad Algermissen](#)
