

Journal Group Experiments with New Mixed Media Sheets

By Roz Stendahl

The Minnesota Center for Book Arts - Visual Journal Collective experiments with Strathmore's new 500 Series Mixed Media paper.

About: 500 Series Mixed Media Sheets



- 100% cotton fiber
- 90 lb. (190 g/m²)
- Archival, lignin free and acid free
- Internally sized for wet media
- Vellum finish, medium drawing tooth
- Available in 22" x 30" sheets
- For watercolor, gouache, acrylic, graphite, pen and ink, colored pencil, marker, pastel and collage
- Also available in Visual Journals and Hardbound Art Journals format

For more information visit: strathmoreartist.com

When Strathmore® first released their wire bound Visual Journals with 500 Series Mixed Media paper, I knew I'd met a paper I loved. I could hardly wait until the Strathmore 500 Series Mixed Media paper became available in 22" x 30" sheets. It meant I could bind my own books with this versatile paper. But it also meant that the Minnesota Center for Book Arts Visual Journal Collective could have a group project—making a journal with this paper. Thanks to a generous gift of paper from Strathmore, that's exactly what thirty intrepid journal keepers did in May 2012. [Click here to see more about the collective.](#)

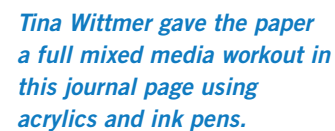
The following group members agreed to share their thoughts about this paper and their approaches to journaling:



Terri Myers Wentzka worked in pen and watercolor on 500 Series Mixed Media paper when sketching her toy polar bear.

Reviewer: Terri Myers Wentzka

Terri Myers Wentzka's experience of the paper's great qualities began at the binding stage. "While binding it into a small journal I immediately appreciated the paper's cloth-like feel, its heft, and the way that it was very easy to tear down into smaller pieces." She worked "with gouache, watercolor, watercolor crayons and pencils, ink and collage in this journal. The paper handled all media without buckling and without any show-through of images from one side of the sheet to the other. I was able to do some lifting of watercolor without difficulty, and found that I could control the paint quite well. It's good to be aware that wet media does not dry quickly on this paper. Although that allowed me the luxury of time to push the paint around, I did have



Tina Wittmer collaged heavily on pages in her journal of Strathmore® 500 Series Mixed Media paper.

Reviewer: Serena Mira Asta

For Serena Mira Asta, Strathmore® 500 Series Mixed Media paper has become one of her favorites. Her next journal will be a Strathmore Hardbound Art Journal with 500 Series Mixed Media paper.

She learned that:

- The paper reacted to watercolor as nicely as some of her favorite hot-press watercolor papers.
- The Micron pen had a fast feel on this surface and was a joy to use. The paper seemed to be made for it.
- Pencil worked great, giving her a smooth, responsive line.
- Pastels blended well with that creamy sense she likes.

Asta continued testing the paper subjecting it to the creation of many-layered surfaces. She writes that her process went like this: "I started with five wet-on-dry and wet-on-wet layers. One was very wet—using Viarco's ArtGraf water-soluble Black Carbon (tailor shape) with a large square grid template. When that was dry, I applied a layer of acrylic natural sand textured gel with a template of small gridded circles. When that dried, I added watercolor to highlight the textured gel, and used Viarco's water-soluble black carbon pencil (dipped in water) to make some marks. The paper took all these layers like a champ. There was no shadowing or pilling, just a lovely image and texture."

Throughout her texture experiments Asta writes, "the paper laid flat, no matter how much water media I used. Granted, I didn't douse the page with liquid, but there were times the work was wetter than I intended. This paper took everything I threw at it."



Asta worked with layers of wet-on-dry glazing over pencil and soft pastel to create this journal illustration.



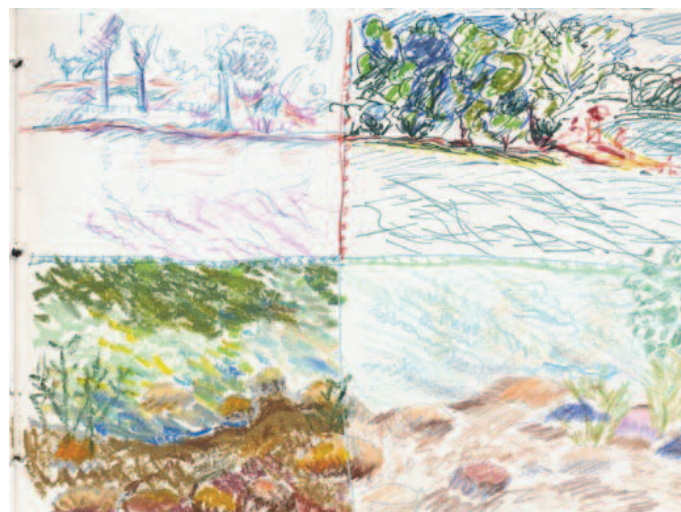
One of the multi-layered and textured pages created by Serena Mira Asta. This artwork was chosen for the top border of this issue of the Artist Newsletter.

Reviewer: Jo Ann Musumeci

Jo Ann Musumeci approached her experiments with an eye for comparison. "I began testing the Strathmore® 500 Series paper with simple pen or pencil drawings and gradually moved through various media from gel pens, colored ball point pens, colored pencils, markers and Sharpies®, watercolor, Cray-Pas® and pen and ink. I haven't used watercolors much in the past few years, so I probably can't fully appreciate how well the paper compares to watercolor paper, but I do frequently draw and found that the paper seemed to receive each medium well, even watercolor, without bleeding or buckling."



Another example of Musumeci's multiple media on a page of comparison tests.



To further test the paper, Musumeci divided one scene, Cedar Lake, into four quadrants on a page. She drew each quadrant in a different medium. Clockwise from left to right, colored ball point pen, Sharpies, colored pencil, and Cray-Pas on the lower left. She felt her experiment showed how the paper did a good job of manifesting the qualities of each medium—sharp lines for the pens, soft for colored pencils, and bright/broad for the Cray Pas.

Reviewer: Jean Shannon

Printmaker Jean Shannon only had time to do some brief testing of the paper. While Jean didn't send an image she did write: "I used the brush pen, opaque watercolor, water-soluble crayons, and a bit of pencil. The paper didn't buckle when I wetted it or after it was dry, a big plus. It erased easily without leaving a chewed up surface (some pencil marks still show, but not enough to be a distraction). I'm looking forward to doing more with this paper."

Closing thoughts: Roz Stendahl

I think you can see how versatile this paper is from these visual journal keepers' experiments. I have been in love with this paper since it first came out. You can see several blog posts concerning my own work with this paper here: RozWoundUp.Typepad.com. Use the blog's search engine to search for references to this paper.

I have found it perfect for painting with watercolor, gouache, acrylics, and inks. It's my new go-to paper. I love that I can purchase it in sheets and make custom books out of it. But if you're not a book binder, don't despair. This paper is available in the 500 Series



Stendahl used gouache, inks, paper collage, and 3-dimensional collage (a medallion of Claybord™) and thread for one of her tests of 500 Series Mixed Media sheets.

Mixed Media Visual Journal (wire bound) and it has just been released in their new Hardbound Art Journals as well. If you're a visual journal artist you now have three ways to enjoy this paper.

About the Artist



Roz Stendahl is a graphic designer, artist, and life-time journal keeper. She teaches bookbinding and journaling at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. Her book arts classes provide students with a solid understanding of materials and mechanics giving students a strong foundation for the discovery of their own artistic voices.

As an instructor, Roz's goal is to develop the observational skills of her students while introducing them to a variety of mixed media techniques and supplies. Roz is a signature member of the Minnesota Watercolor Society. In addition to her book arts classes she teaches colored pencil, watercolor, and color theory classes in local and regional art programs.

Roz's artwork has been exhibited locally and nationally. It has been included in numerous books. She is one of 50 artists featured in *"An Illustrated Life: Drawing Inspiration from the Private Sketchbooks of Artists, Illustrators, and Designers,"* by Danny Gregory. Her Minnesota Journal Project 2000 journal is part of the permanent archives of the Minnesota Historical Society.

You can reach the participants in this testing here:

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Questions From Our Website

What is the difference between the top side and back side of art paper? How can I tell what side is the front? Is the performance the same on both sides?

The top side and back side of papers manufactured on Fourdrinier paper machines (the most common type), have different physical and visual properties. The differences can be barely discernible or significant depending on the type of paper, felt, chemistry and fibers used.

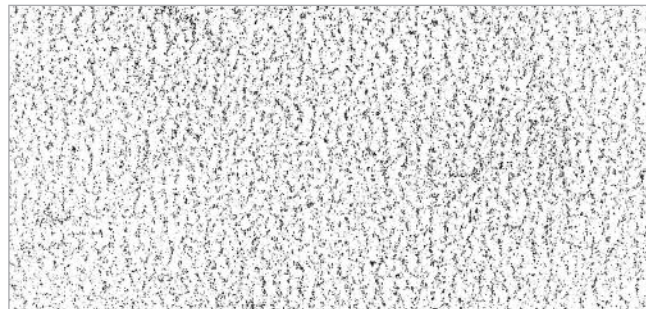
In papermaking, the top side is called the felt side and the back side is called the wire side. The felt side finish of a textured paper is traditionally produced by a Dandy Roll, which is a wire cylinder that imparts a pattern onto the surface, or by a Marking Felt which resembles a woven, felt blanket that presses against the wet paper pulp. The dandy roll and felt, which varies by paper type, is what gives paper its distinct texture. For example, the felt used on drawing paper has a fine, slight texture. Felts used on cold press watercolor papers have a coarse, heavily textured pattern.

The wire side is named after a mesh screen at the beginning of the Fourdrinier that the wet pulp travels along. Water drains through the wire mesh and helps form the wet paper pulp into paper. During this process, the paper “picks up” some of the wire pattern.

The surface finish and working properties such as surface strength and absorbency are engineered into the felt side of the paper. That’s not to say that the back (or wire side) of all papers will not perform well. Many artists use the back sides of paper, for example, when working in sketchbooks. But for many types of paper, the top-to-back-side differences may be more obvious and the artist will prefer to work on the felt side.

What if you are unsure what side is the top or felt side of the paper? The felt side of paper typically has a larger, more irregular pattern and the wire side has a

We marked the felt and wire sides of our 400 Series Mixed Media paper with a carbon smudge to make the patterns visible.



Felt side: Larger and irregular pattern



Wire side: Finer, regular pattern of the wire mesh

finer, regular mesh pattern that is rectangular or diamond-shaped. Since there is greater variability in felt patterns, it’s easier to identify the wire marks. It is also easier to see the pattern by holding the paper up to a light source with the light striking at a very low angle (less than 10°). If you’d like, you can fold the paper so that you can compare both sides together.

If you are still having difficulty seeing the wire mesh pattern, you can wet a piece of the paper in water. Then let it stand a few minutes and examine it as described above. Wetting the paper can make the patterns more pronounced. Again, look for a regular mesh pattern of rectangle or diamond shapes to identify the wire or back side of the paper.