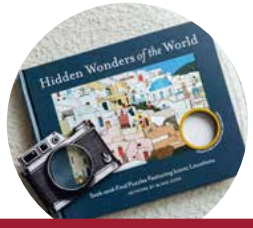
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Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 24 | ISSUE 4 | Fall 2026

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



GIVEAWAY TIME!
After reading our featured article, don't forget to enter the giveaway on page 8!



New Online Workshop
Join Sarah Simon as she explores the joyful watercolor sketchbook.



Artist How To Series
Arist Emily Rouleau explores using colored pencils on 3 different surfaces.



Strathmore History
Ever wonder where the Strathmore thistle came from?

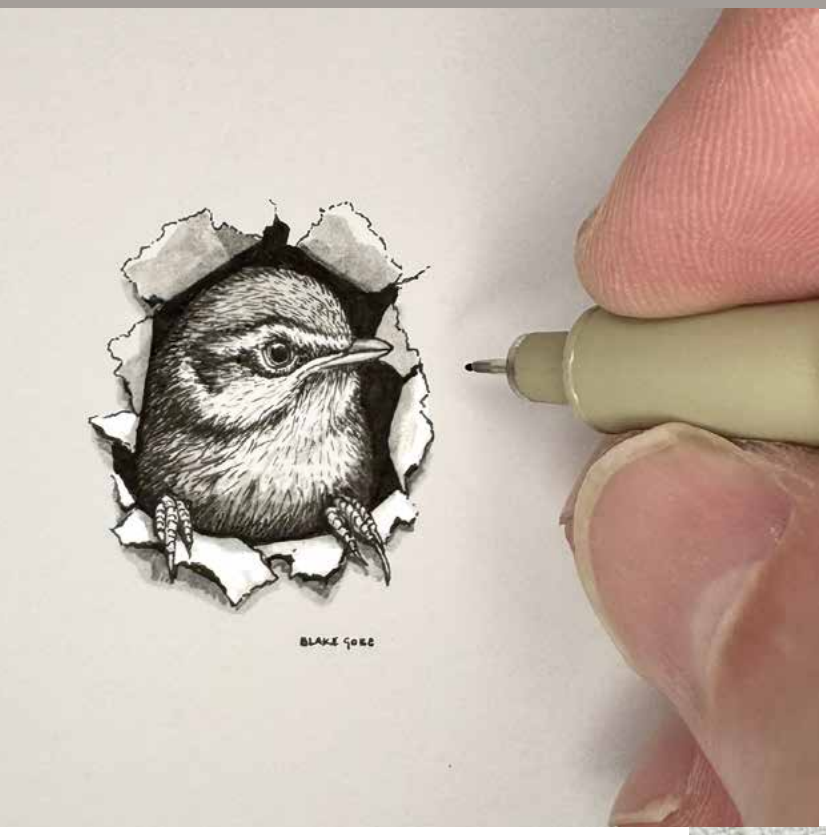
MAIN FEATURE

Hidden Wonders and the Art of Miniature Ink

By Blake Gore



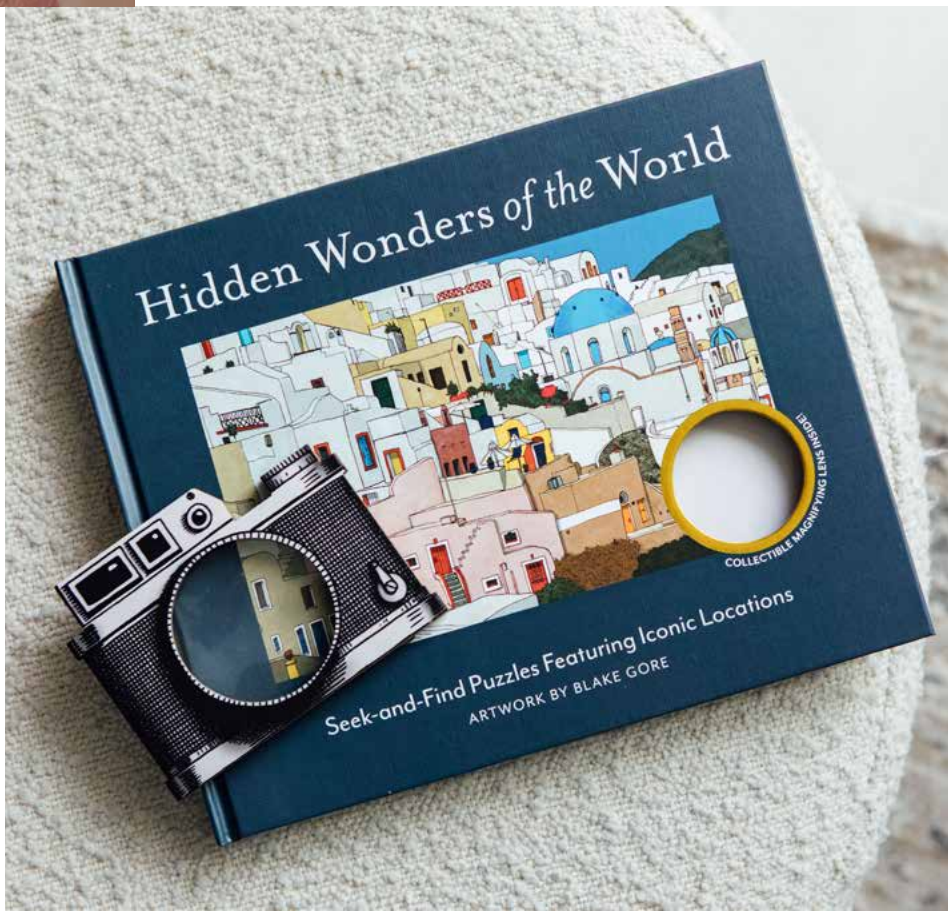
I never set out to become an artist. In fact, miniature drawing arrived in my life quietly and rather accidentally. At 37, I was working as a business school adviser and instructor at Vanderbilt University and had not drawn since childhood. But, following my own advice to students to be lifelong learners, I began honing my craft at the breakfast table after being intrigued by a miniature drawing prompt on social media. What began as a simple daily ritual with a pen and a scrap of paper eventually grew into a body of work that now fills a book, a studio, and more of my life than I ever expected.



Working small didn't feel like a choice at first. It felt like a challenge. Could I capture the feeling of a place, its architecture, its atmosphere, and even its story inside just a few inches? Could a landmark still feel grand if it was drawn at the size of a matchbook? Questions like these kept me drawing deeply into many nights and ultimately formed the foundation of *Hidden Wonders of the World*, my new seek-and-find book of miniature ink illustrations.

THE BOOK: A WORLD TOUR IN INCHES

Hidden Wonders of the World is a seek-and-find collection of global landmarks drawn at a scale that invites you to lean in. Every page contains a place people think they already know, like the the Eiffel Tower or the canals of Amsterdam, but rendered in a way that makes them new again by hiding tiny cultural artifacts amongst the scenes. When you shrink something iconic down to a few inches, you're invited to look more deeply and see how every line has earned its place.

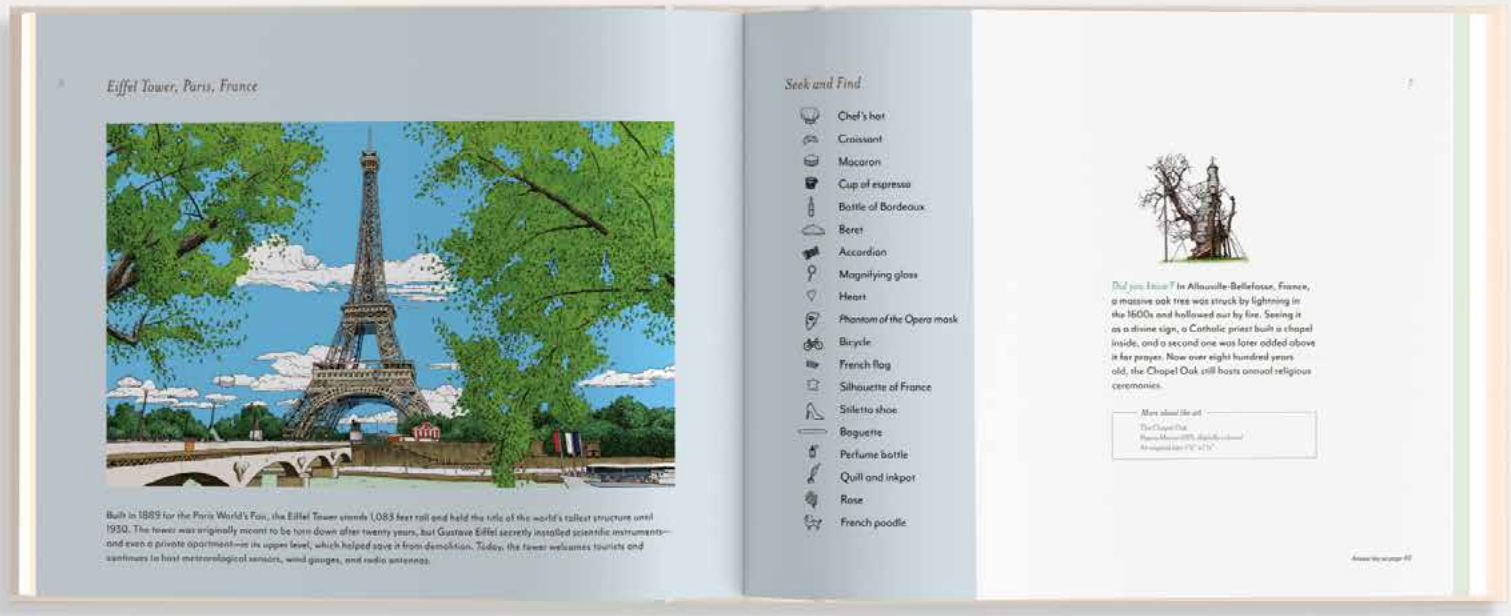


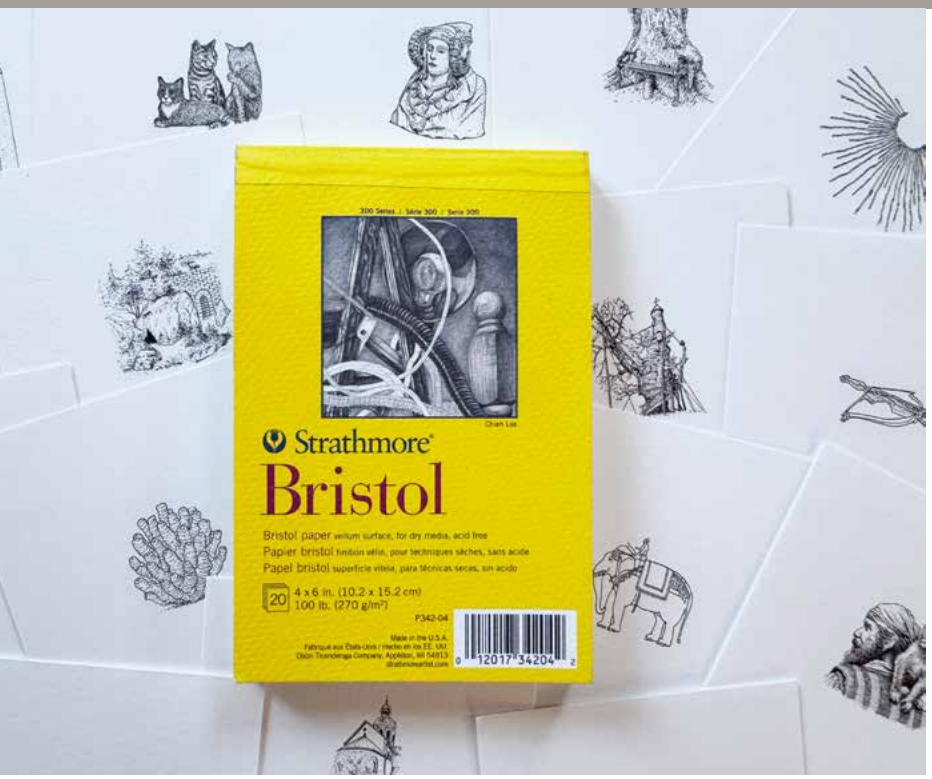




The book grew slowly, drawing by drawing, over many months. Some illustrations came together in a single sitting. Others required days of micro adjustments, texture building, and careful corrections. I wanted each piece to feel like a tiny window into a much larger world. In fact, with over 400 hidden objects, there certainly is a lot of that world to explore!

Creating the illustrations taught me as much about patience as it did about ink. Miniature work forces you to slow down, breathe, and commit to precision. It's a rhythm I've come to love inside and outside of my art.



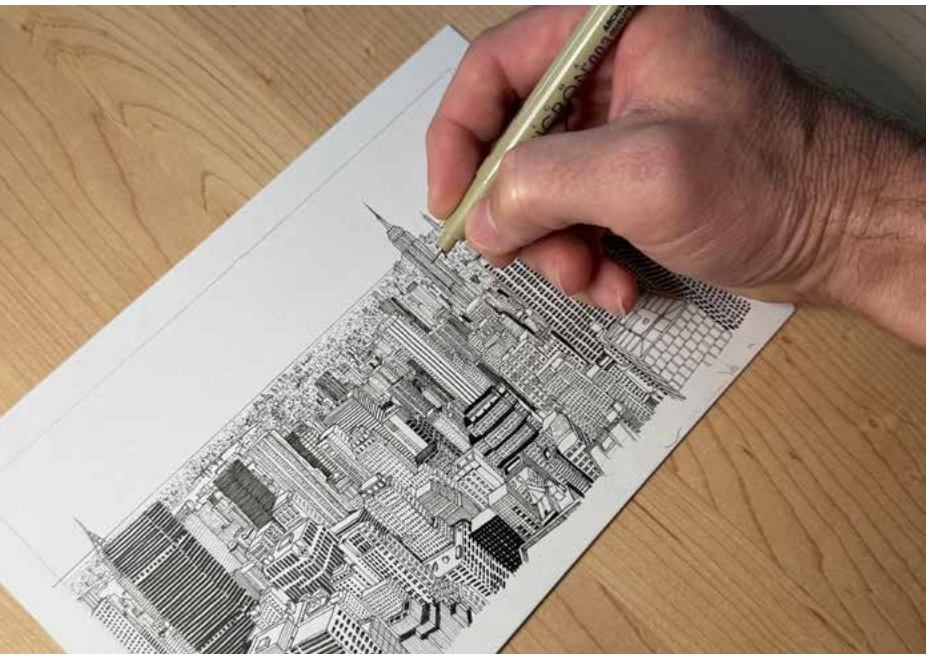


WHY I USE STRATHMORE SURFACES

Because my work depends on crisp, controlled lines, the surface matters as much as the pen. I rely on *Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Smooth* for nearly all of my miniature drawings.

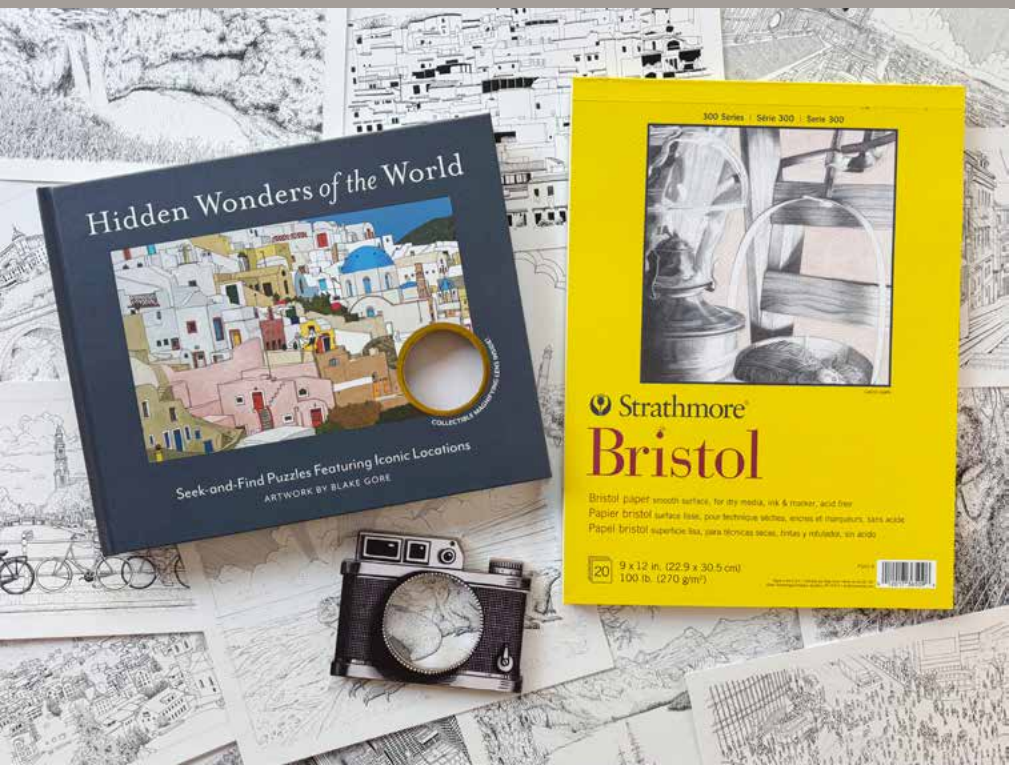
The smoothness allows fineliners to glide without feathering, which is essential when a single stray mark can change the entire look of an intricate figure or precise roofline.

The paper also scans well which is an important part of turning original drawings into book ready illustrations. The consistency of the surface means every drawing feels familiar under my hand. It's a quiet kind of reliability that makes the technical side of miniature work possible.





> *Miniature work forces you to slow down, breathe, and commit to precision. It's a rhythm I've come to love inside and outside of my art.*



MY STEP BY STEP MINIATURE PROCESS



I'm often asked how such small drawings come together, so here's a look at the process behind each illustration:

1. Reference Gathering & Concept Planning

For the drawings in this book, I drew from carefully selected reference photographs. But, rather than simply copying a photograph, drawing in miniature is about distilling the essence of a place. I look for shapes, rhythms, and architectural features that define the structure.

2. Thumbnail Sketches

Before committing to ink, I make tiny pencil thumbnails to test composition. At this scale, balance matters more than detail.

3. Blocking Shapes

Using pencil, I lightly map out the major forms: trees, arches, streets, negative space. This stage is all about proportion.

4. Choosing the Right Pen

I typically work with fineliners in .15mm-.45mm range. The smaller the drawing, the more important the pen width becomes.

5. Building Texture Without Clutter

Texture is where miniature work becomes fun. The illusion of bricks, stone, foliage, and water often require a lot of experimentation outside the actual drawing. The challenge is to suggest detail without overwhelming the drawing. I rely on patterns, spacing, and directional strokes to create the illusion of complexity.

6. Final Pass & Micro Corrections

I refine edges, adjust line weight, and clean up any inconsistencies. At this scale, the final 5% of the work often takes the longest.





INK FRIENDLY TECHNIQUES TO TRY

Being October, it's the perfect time to share a few miniature ink techniques you can experiment with.



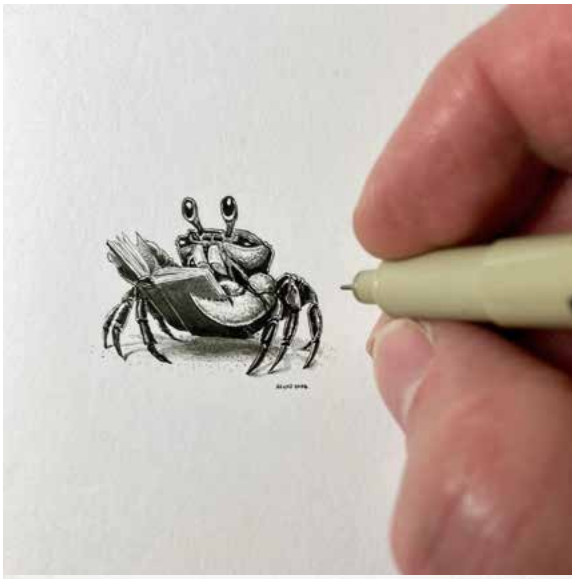
Draw something in a 1 or 2-inch square.
Limiting space forces clarity and creativity. Many attempts at completing a daily art challenge fail because they're too ambitious and time intensive. Cutting down on the size of the canvas can help your daily sketch feel more manageable.

Practice micro textures.
Brick, shingles, stone, and foliage can all be suggested with simple patterns. Beware of over-rendering these objects. Drawing loose, basic patterns is not only faster, but especially in the case of foliage, can also lead to a more realistic sketch.

Use negative space intentionally.
Leaving areas blank can be just as powerful as filling them.

Simplify complex architecture.
Break buildings into basic shapes before adding detail.

These exercises build confidence with line control and can help you discover how much can be expressed with very little.







AN UNLIKELY JOURNEY INTO ART





My path into art wasn't traditional. I didn't grow up expecting to draw, and I didn't imagine I'd one day create a book of miniature illustrations. But, sometimes the smallest things, like a daily drawing challenge, can become the start of something much bigger.

Miniature drawing reminded me to pay attention and helped me cultivate new ways to slow down and appreciate levels of detail in life that I had never noticed. And, it showed me that creativity doesn't require a grand beginning; it can grow from curiosity, patience, and the willingness to explore something new.

If there's one thing I hope readers take away from my work, it's that small things matter. A tiny drawing can hold a world. A single line can tell a story.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Creating *Hidden Wonders of the World* has been one of the most rewarding projects of my life. It allowed me to explore global landmarks through a lens that feels uniquely mine: small, detailed, intentional, and full of discovery. I'm grateful to Strathmore for supporting artists who work in unconventional ways and for giving me the chance to share this journey with you.

Whether you're participating in a daily art challenge, exploring miniature drawing for the first time, or simply curious about the process behind the book, I hope this article inspires you to look a little more closely and find beauty in the details.



Website: blakegore.com
Instagram: @blakegore
Youtube: @blakegore
Facebook: @blakegoredesign

ABOUT THE ARTIST

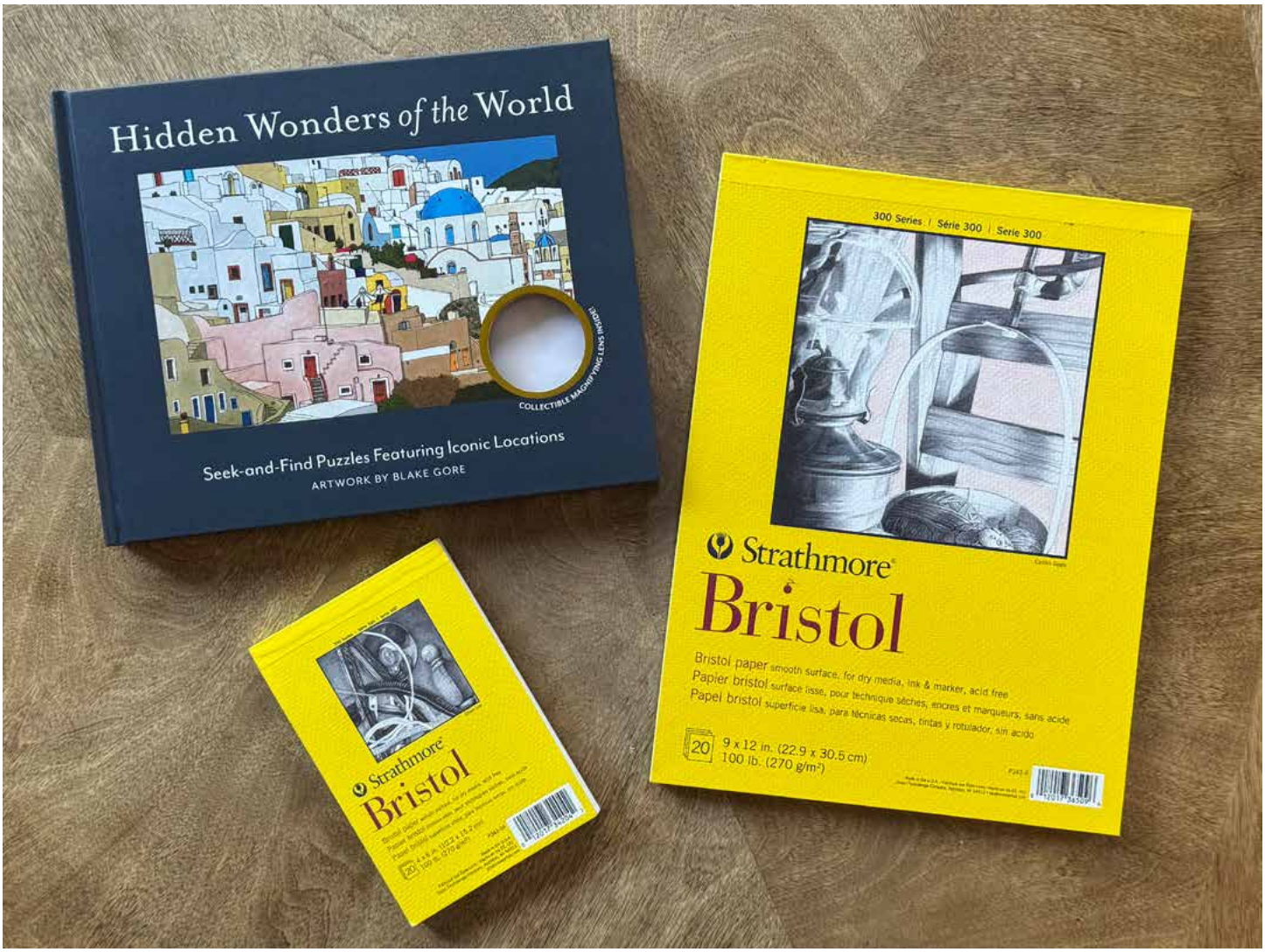
Combining endless curiosity with an eye for detail, I create miniature art using a .15mm pen nib and minimalist canvases. Often drawing inside only an inch or two, I'm inspired by the challenge of creating more with less. Hand-drawn with no magnification or eyeglasses, my miniatures demonstrate how constraints can enhance creativity.

Lacking formal art training, my journey as an artist has been as unexpected as could be. At 37 years old, I discovered drawing as a creative outlet during my career as an instructor and adviser at Vanderbilt University. Following my own advice to students to be lifelong learners, I began honing my craft at the breakfast table after being intrigued by a miniature drawing prompt on social media.

Before long, my miniatures began showing from Middle America to Manhattan and finding their way into private collections around the globe. Always up for interesting collaborations, I've partnered with brands such as Jo-Ann Stores, Monopoly/Hasbro, BLICK Art Materials, Canson, Strathmore, and others.

An Ole Miss graduate from Mississippi, I now reside with my family in Southwest Virginia's New River Valley.

GIVEAWAY!



We've teamed up with Blake for an extra special giveaway where you could win his new book, *Hidden Wonders of the World*, and two Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Smooth Pads!

CLICK HERE TO ENTER

Strathmore ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Join us for Strathmore's **FREE** 2026 Online Workshops!

Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along in the online classroom as instructors guide you through various art topics. After a lesson releases, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year. #StrathmoreWorkshops

Share all the fun on Instagram and Facebook using #StrathmoreWorkshops

Workshops start March 3 and continue through December 31, 2026

WORKSHOP 3 NOW OPEN

The Joyful Sketchbook: Watercolor Movement & Shine

Instructor: Sarah Simon

Inspiration is everywhere, but knowing where to begin can feel overwhelming. In this workshop, Sarah Simon (*@themintgardener*) will guide you through her creative process for transforming photos, memories, colors, and experiences into an 8-page sketchbook journey inspired by her French retreat. From creating a mood board to developing a finished collection of artwork, you'll learn a simple, transferable process you can use with any subject that inspires you.



LESSON 1

Materials Exploration
Opens October 5, 2026



LESSON 2

Inspiration Exploration - Viva la France!
Opens October 12, 2026



LESSON 3

Timed Studies
Opens October 19, 2026



LESSON 4

Develop Your Favorites
Opens October 26, 2026

WATCH HERE







ARTIST how-to series

EXPLORING COLORED PENCILS
WITH EMILY ROULEAU

Join artist Emily Rouleau for a three-part colored pencil series all about how different papers can change the way your drawing comes together. Emily works on Sketch, Toned Tan, and Bristol Vellum paper while sharing simple tips for layering color, building depth, preserving highlights, and adjusting your pencil pressure along the way. Each lesson focuses on a different project, from a reflective teapot to vegetable studies and a finished butterfly illustration.

SUPPLIES:

- *Strathmore 400 Series Sketch Art Book*
- *Strathmore 400 Series Toned Tan Sketch Paper*
- *Strathmore 500 Series Bristol Vellum Paper (100% cotton)*
- Lyra Rembrandt Polycolor Colored Pencils
- Kneadable Eraser, Pencil Sharpener, Tape

WATCH THE TUTORIALS







400 SERIES GREETING CARDS

Keeping the art of handmade & written correspondence alive with artist-quality papers in card formats. All 400 Series Cards are available in 2 sizes: 3.5"x4.875"(Announcement size) and 5" x 6.875" (Full size) and come with accompanying envelopes that have a unique, beautiful deckle edge.



BRISTOL CARDS
Weight: 2-ply • Surface: Smooth

MIXED MEDIA CARDS
Weight: 184lb / 300gsm • Surface: Vellum

WATERCOLOR CARDS*
Weight: 140lb / 300gsm • Surface: Cold Press

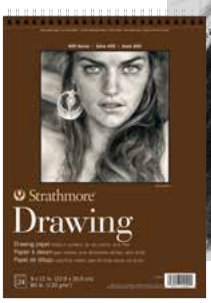
CLICK HERE
to follow along with **Kristen Van Leuven** to create 4 holiday greetings on our **400 Series Watercolor Cards**

*used in Kristen's tutorials

STRATHMORE AMBASSADOR

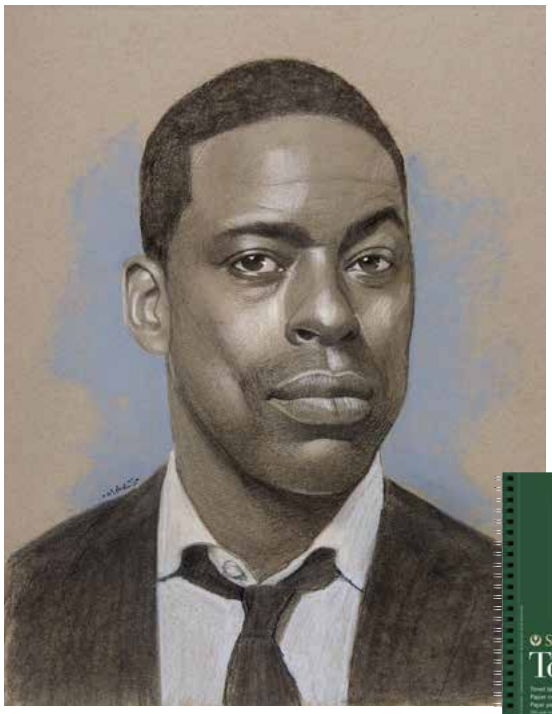
JUSTIN MAAS

See the difference the surface can make. Strathmore Ambassador *Justin Maas* puts different Strathmore papers to work, creating four striking portraits that showcase the unique character and possibilities of each surface.





Jennifer Coolidge drawn on Strathmore 400 Series *Drawing paper*, 80lb / 130gsm, cream



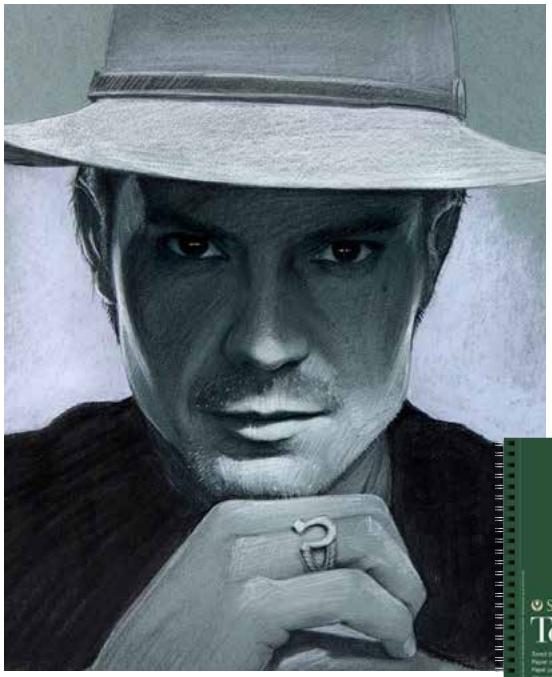


Sterling K. Brown drawn on Strathmore 400 Series *Toned Tan* paper, 80lb / 118gsm





Betty White drawn on Strathmore 400 Series *Toned Gray* paper, 80lb / 118gsm





Timothy Olyphant drawn on Strathmore 400 Series *Toned Blue* paper, 80lb / 118gsm



Art by Woodward Payne

THE STORY BEHIND THE Strathmore® THISTLE

In the late 1800s, Strathmore founder Horace Moses visited Strathmore Valley in Scotland, where he was struck by the beauty of its thistle-covered landscape. Inspired by the valley, he adopted the Strathmore name and thistle as symbols of the quality papers made at his mill.

A Symbol That Has Evolved Over Time



The thistle has taken on many styles throughout Strathmore's history, but its meaning has remained the same: a lasting symbol of Strathmore and our commitment to quality papers made for artists.

Look Closely at our 400 Series Covers

The thistle remains a signature part of Strathmore's identity, appearing in different ways across our 400 Series covers. Each cover features artwork by a real artist, who decides how and where the thistle appears…as the plant itself, our logo, part of the artwork, or even a hidden detail.



Next time you pick up a 400 Series pad, take a closer look.
Can you find the thistle?