Strathmore® Celebrates 120 Years

In the mid-1890’s, Mr. Moses made a trip to the Strathmore Valley in Scotland and became inspired by its beauty and the blooming August thistles. By 1895 Mr. Moses began using the phrase “Strathmore Quality” and the thistle as a symbol of the highest quality papers. The symbol of the thistle has taken on different appearances throughout the years, but it continues to signify excellence in art papers.

By 1905, the Strathmore artist portfolio of professional grade papers included Detailed Drawing Paper along with Illustrating and Patent Office Board.

This early advertisement from the 1930’s in the Art Materials Trade News entices retailers to keep their shelves stocked with Strathmore papers. In that same period, we also created the slogan, “Paper is Part of the Picture.” This slogan continues to be part of our communication pieces.

By the late 1890’s, charcoal paper along with illustration and drawing boards displayed the Strathmore brand. The above ad appeared in the October 1900 issue of Architectural Illustration Magazine.

Strathmore Artist Papers™ is proud of our heritage and legacy of producing quality fine art papers. It began on March 17, 1892 when Horace A. Moses turned the first shovel of dirt for a new paper mill in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Called the Mittineague Paper Company, the mill began producing writing papers, bookkeeping papers and cotton-fiber artist papers in December of 1892.

Wherever you see artists at work you see the Thistle-Mark of Quality

Strathmore Artist Papers

Papers and Boards

For sample book write: Strathmore Paper Company
One Front Street • West Springfield, Mass.
The 1940’s and 1950’s saw rapid growth with the introduction of many Alexis (now 400 Series) papers and a line of blank greeting cards. Greeting card and illustration contests have woven their way in and out of the fabric of our marketing programs since the 1940’s.

In the 1940’s through 1950’s, Strathmore® ran a series of advertisements that featured “Prominent Artist Users of Strathmore.” Norman Rockwell was one of a number of well-known artists featured during this period. His ad appeared in American Artist and Famous Artists Magazine in 1957.

Advertisement from 1949 features student winners of Strathmore Scholastic Awards contest.
The Strathmore® thistle is a prominent design element on pads from the 1950’s. This ad features Alexis Water Color pads and Layout Pads, and Strathmore Drawing pads. Alexis evolved into today’s 400 Series line.
By the mid-1970’s, three quality levels of Strathmore® papers addressed the needs of student, recreational and professional artists.

In 1974, 300 Series is developed and Alexis becomes 400 Series. Our premium 100% cotton papers take on the title 500 Series.

Left: In the 1960’s, Strathmore ran a series of ads featuring college students explaining why they use Strathmore. This ad campaign was memorable. We still receive calls from artists or family members looking for copies of the ads or information about the individuals featured.
120 Years of Quality

Today the Strathmore® brand represents a complete line of artist quality papers for all media and every level of expertise. This 120th anniversary we celebrate the proud heritage of Strathmore, and our commitment to ensure that the legacy of quality, performance and longevity lives on.
Featured Product

500 SERIES

Mixed Media Sheets and Boards

Professional quality sheets and boards are designed to accept both wet and dry media, providing the ultimate surface for mixed media.

- 100% cotton fiber surfaces
- Internally sized for wet media
- Durable vellum finish for traditional drawing techniques
- Archival, lignin free and acid free
- Excellent for watercolor, gouache, acrylic, graphite, pen and ink, colored pencil, marker, pastel and collage
- Available in a resealable, protective bag

500 SERIES Mixed Media Sheets
90 lb. (22" x 30" x 500 sheets) 190 g/m²
Internally sized for wet media with durable vellum finish for drawing techniques. Ideal for bookbinding. Archival, lignin free and acid free. Available in bulk sheets or in a resealable, protective bag.

500 SERIES Mixed Media Boards
52 pt. Internally sized sheets with durable vellum finish are mounted to both sides of a high quality white board. Archival, lignin free and acid free. The boards are excellent for both fine art and commercial illustration. Available in a standard board size and in our popular Ready Cut sizes for readymade frames and mats. Packaged in a resealable, protective bag.

Learn more at strathmoreartist.com
Questions From Our Website

What is the grain direction on the 500 Series Mixed Media Sheets? I’d like to use it for a book binding project.

Paper is made up of individual fibers from materials such as wood or cotton fiber. In the papermaking process on a Fourdrinier paper machine (the most common type), the fibers align themselves in the direction of the vibrating wire mesh upon which the paper is formed. This is called the machine direction or grain direction. As the fibers travel through the machine on a vibrating mesh, they tend to line up in the same forward direction, parallel to the direction of the web or side edges of the paper. This is called the grain direction.

The grain direction of the paper is important when binding books, because paper is scored and folded. For bookbinding, you should always fold with the grain direction parallel to the fold and the spine of your binding. Folding parallel to the grain is easier and the paper is less likely to “crack,” create a rough fold and result in a bulky binding edge. It also helps book's pages to turn easier, stay open and lay flatter.

The grain direction on our 500 Series Mixed Media Sheets is “short grain” which means that the grain runs in the direction or parallel to the shortest dimension. The sheets are 22" x 30" so the grain runs parallel to the 22" edge. (Note: A paper is called “grain long” if the grain is parallel to the paper's long side.)

If you are uncertain of the grain direction, there are techniques you can use to determine the direction in papers. If the grain direction is strong enough, you can identify the direction by “feel.” Take the sheet of paper in your hands and gently curl/bow the paper towards the middle, first in one direction and then in the other direction. The direction that bends more easily, with less resistance, is the grain direction.

What are optical brighteners? How do they affect the performance of papers?

Optical brighteners are additives that are used in paper manufacturing to increase the perceived “whiteness” of the paper. Their use results in a whiter and brighter appearance, which can be desirable for many paper types.

However, for fine art papers there are advantages to selecting papers that do not contain optical brightener additives (OBAs). First, the natural white color, or what is known as “optically dead” papers, will remain consistent under different lighting conditions. In contrast, the color of papers that contain optical brighteners can shift depending on light source. Using “optically dead” papers is especially important for artwork that will be scanned for high quality reproductions. Another advantage is that the color of OBA-free paper will remain more consistent over time. While OBAs enhance the perceived whiteness and brightness of papers, they can break down over time, causing color shifts.

Strathmore® 500 Series Drawing, Bristol, Watercolor, Mixed Media and Marker papers as well as our 500 Series Illustration and Mixed Media boards are considered optically dead. In addition, our 300 and 400 Series Sketch, Drawing, Bristol, Watercolor and Mixed Media papers are manufactured without adding any optical brighteners during the production process. Although no OBAs are added in the papermaking process of our 300 and 400 Series papers, trace amounts of optical brighteners can sometimes be present in the pulp used to create the papers.