Meet the Author / Illustrator

Dennis Rockhill



Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dennis Rockhill is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay with a BA in Art and Graphic Design. He also attended Drake University and studied at MIAD (Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design). He lives in Green Bay with his wife and two daughters and works as a graphic artist and illustrator.

Growing up in Northeastern Wisconsin, Dennis has grown fond of watching the snow fall and sweep across the ground. When winter blows in Dennis smiles because he knows it's time to build another front yard snow bear. Every year he builds a snow bear (even if he has to borrow snow from a neighbor's yard) much like the one that takes the young girl of *Polar Slumber / Sueño polar* for a ride in the Arctic landscape.

Polar Slumber / Sueño polar (2004) is a Book Sense '76 Pick, a "Read On Wisconsin" recommended book and a finalist for ForeWord Magazine's Children's Book of the Year Award. It is filled with the same lively, colorful illustrations that adorn his other Raven Tree Press titles, *Ocean Whisper / Sururro del océano* (2005) and *Meadow Dance / Danza de la prader* (2007).

Ocean Whisper / Sururro del océano was inspired by Dennis's trip to Hawaii. While snorkeling Dennis could hear the whales talking to each other. Fascinated by this underwater world, he researched whales and the various plant and animal life that is depicted in this dreamy 'under the sea' wordless book.

A summer project of watching a caterpillar turn into a butterfly (right in a jar on the kitchen windowsill) became the driving force for *Meadow Dance / Danza de la prader*. Dennis's whole family enjoyed seeing the metamorphosis and he chronicled the experience with photos to use as reference for the black-and-white iconic art that will accompany this third book for Raven Tree Press.

All three Rockhill titles have hints of Dennis's daughters in the illustrations, such as the curly hair. His children amaze him with their unsurpassed powers of imagination. In fact, his family is so important to his creative endeavors that his basement studio opens up to his family room. That way he is never far from the hubbub of daily life.

Contact Dennis Rockhill through the publisher at raven@raventreepress.com.

Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano, © 2005, ISBN 0-9741992-4-9
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Questions for the Author / Illustrator

Dennis Rockhill



1. Who or what inspires you to write or draw?
Since their birth, Dennis has been inspired by his two young daughters. Whatever holds their interest holds his. Highly observant, and in tune with his surroundings Dennis is just as amazed by the majesty of the world around him as his children.

2. What is your favorite writing / illustration environment? Describe your workspace.
Dennis's studio is in his basement. It's a cozy room with a large desk, his computer, and all of his art supplies. There is a large closet where he hides the stuff he doesn't need often. But, with a large window in the wall that opens to the family room his studio is not a hiding space. Close to his biggest inspiration, his family, this is the only place he draws.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for writing / illustrating?
Dennis uses, almost exclusively, Prismacolor® colored pencils. Along with those, he has an electric sharpener, erasers, pencil extenders and a large paint brush to wipe away pencil shavings. His computer stands dutifully at attention in the event Dennis needs to do some research, layout, and because once in a great while he needs to fix "mistakes" in his drawings.

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
Dennis does most of his drawing in the morning. Working as a graphic designer during the day, the morning is the best time for him to work. Dennis likes to start his day with a cup of coffee, his ipod® playing, and a fresh sheet of drawing paper.

5. Who are your favorite authors / illustrators? What influence have they had on your work?
Taking after David Weisner's illustrative story, *Tuesday*, Dennis looks to Jan Brett's level of detail and texture, and Chris VanAllsburg's approach to page layout and point of view.

6. What specific message do you want people to get from this book and why? What experiences have you had that directly reinforce your book's message?
Dennis hopes that all of his books inspire people to use their imaginations and enjoy their surroundings, wherever they may be.

Questions for the Author / Illustrator (continued)

Dennis Rockhill



7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that other may be interested in?
Though Dennis has very little extra time for other hobbies his curiosity keeps him interested in all sorts of things. At this point in life, however, he mostly just explores things like the dessert or ocean through reading.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you want to illustrate it? Where did your ideas come from?
It is hard for Dennis to say how long each book takes as he usually begins pulling ideas together well in advance of the actual production. He spent about two years getting ready for *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera*, the next book in the Wordless Wonderland Set, and estimates that the actual production of each book takes about one year. His ideas come from the things that fascinate his girls. *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera* is a celebration of summer, sunshine, colors and childhood. The idea was sparked by his girls' fascination with butterflies and their interest in the plants around their house.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Dennis spends a lot of time looking at pictures of his subject matter. He wants to get to know it well enough that he can put the actual pictures aside and draw solely from his imagination. This way they are realistic, but not real.

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
Dennis uses either his daughters or a friend's son (*Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano*) as the model for his main characters. He thinks it's great to be able to include family and friends in the process. He also gets a kick out of how they react to the final product, and hopes they enjoy reading his books as much as he enjoys creating them.

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About the Book

Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano



Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano charts the depths of one boy's imagination. Using the accompanying lyrical bilingual poem to launch the story *Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano* is sure to be an aquatic inspiration for parent and child alike.

Having visited the city aquarium the young hero of the story hangs his new whale poster and listens to the deep breathing of the ocean in a conch shell. Feeding his pet goldfish, he folds himself under soft blue waves of blankets and drifts off to sleep. What happens next is nothing short of magical. The whales in his poster come to life transforming his room into a watery wonderland! Come along for this fantastic swim with Dennis Rockhill and all the fish in sea.

Author / illustrator, Dennis Rockhill, is a master of his medium. Dennis begins by thoroughly researching each of his subjects, memorizing their form and color so that when he later translates his research into drawing he can put aside the picture and draw strictly from memory. This produces a realistic, yet highly imaginative, rendering of each of his subjects.

Using rough pencil sketches on tracing paper to plot the scenes for his children's picture books, Dennis later transfers these onto high quality drawing paper. He then uses Prismacolor® colored pencils in multiple layers to achieve the desired color, depth, and texture. Each of Dennis's drawings spans the breadth of both pages and is complemented by black and white iconic illustrations to further enhance the story. *Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano* is nothing short of an art masterpiece.

This book is a wordless picture book. Wordless picture books and picture books with limited words are both beautiful and educational. They help children develop language, creative thinking and enhance future reading and writing skills. We include some bilingual instruction notes for using wordless picture books and in the case of our author/illustrator Dennis Rockhill's books, a lyrical bilingual English/Spanish poem is also featured.

Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano helps children gain an appreciation of art and literature, another culture/language, the diversity and color of a number of sea creatures, and demonstrates the power of their own imaginations. It is guaranteed to quickly become one of your children's favorite stories.



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Rave Reviews

Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano



"...told entirely through soft, gentle, deep-toned artwork of a young boy and his dreams of experiencing the ocean firsthand. A unique, vibrant, and almost purely visual experience of wonder that will surely appeal to and instill an appreciation of the sea's wonders within children of all ages, even the very young." **—Midwest Book Review, Small Press Bookwatch**

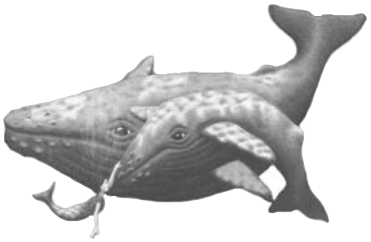
"...Rockhill's main illustrations are richly colored, detailed and well executed, but are also heightened in a way not unlike...Thomas Kinkade's paintings. Each is accompanied by three smaller pencil illustrations providing subplot information..." **—Kirkus Reviews**

"...beautiful, inspirational, and fairytale-ish book is intended for all ages and is highly recommended..." **—Jennifer LB Leese, Maryland author, geocities.com/ladyjiraff**

"... designed for the child to tell the story he sees unfolding in pictures in his own words. This allows a child's imagination to develop. We rated the book four hearts." **—Heartland Reviews**

"...exquisite illustrations. The concept teaches left-to right eye movement while encouraging creative thinking." **—San Antonio Woman**

"*Ocean Whisper* is a wonderful book that will inspire kids about the wonder of the sea and is sure to get them on the road to reading." **—Wyland, marine artist, Wyland Worldwide**



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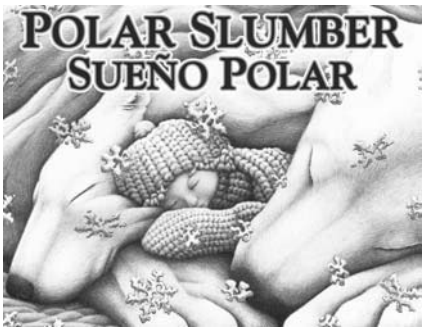
About the Series

Dennis Rockhill's *Wordless Wonderland Set*, comprised of *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera, Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano, and Polar Slumber / Sueño polar*, is a true joy for parent and child alike. From a winter romp with a family of polar bears to an oceanic swim with the whales to a flight with butterflies, Rockhill unlocks even the rustiest imagination with his stunning, museum quality illustrations. These books give new meaning to the old saying that a picture speaks a thousand words. With the Wordless Wonderland Set there are literally millions of story possibilities because you make them up!

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Wordless Wonderland







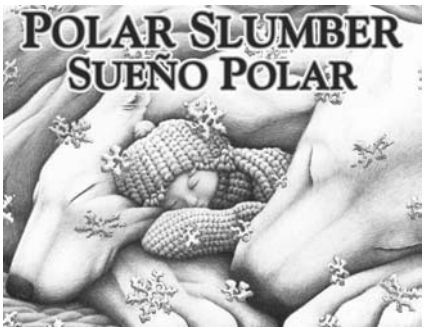
These books are wordless picture books. Wordless picture books and picture books with limited words are both beautiful and educational. They help children develop language, creative thinking and enhance future reading and writing skills. We include some bilingual instruction notes for using wordless picture books and in the case of our author/illustrator Dennis Rockhill's books, a lyrical bilingual English/Spanish poem is also featured.

The *Wordless Wonderland Set* helps children gain an appreciation of art and literature, another culture/language, and demonstrates the power of their own imaginations.

Wordless Wonderland Set written and illustrated by Dennis Rockhill includes:
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Wordless Wonderland





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