

Interview about *A Child's Good Morning* and *Sleepy ABC*

What kind of hobbies do you have?

When you get to do what I do all day you don't need a lot of hobbies. My painting is my hobby! But here's some things I like to do too:

I like to read, watch movies, Showtime and HBO and listen to music, from Yoyo Ma to Black Eyed Peas. I like to rearrange my furniture and shop for beautiful, sheets, textiles, pretty plates and bowls. I like to have dinner with my girlfriends. I like to hang out in toy stores and bookstores. I like to sit on the roof of my building in NYC and watch the airplanes go over my head. I love to go to my daughter's basketball games and travel. I like to make soup and I like to sleep.

Some interesting info about me:

1) I work in a loft in NYC in the winter and a studio in the country in the summer. I look out my window and see buildings and lots of people in winter and I see trees and flowers and squirrels in the summer. I like the contrast of both places.

2) I work in my pajamas a lot.

3) Sometimes I put the potholder in the refrigerator. Mostly when I'm busy working. I'm very distracted.

4) I love to sit in cafes and watch people.

5) I love to sit in playgrounds and watch kids

6) I love to sit in movies in the dark and listen to people before the movie starts.

7) I am living my dream. I couldn't think of anything I'd rather do than children's books.

Book Information and Background

We are interested in the story behind your book--as are many reviewers, interviewers, and booksellers. Please provide any helpful background information about the book's origins. How did the idea for your book originate?

I got a phone call from Martha Rago the creative director at Harper Collins, asking if I would like to illustrate two Margaret Wise Brown books. What a dream and an honor. *A Child's Good Morning* was the first in the series to be followed by *Sleepy ABC*.

I read the manuscript and was totally taken with its charm.

Martha and I had worked together on my first book *Over The Moon* so I knew

it would be great fun and that the book would be designed beautifully. As soon as I read the text I was filled with a million ideas of how I wanted the pages to look. Then I did what I always do which is lots of little thumbnail sketches just to get it down on paper. I read and sketch and read and sketch.

This book was very different than many of my other books because the text was more about animals and nature rather than babies. Most of my books were primarily about babies. This was going to be a creative challenge for me but it was something I had been thinking about working on for a long time. I love folk art of all kinds. It is one of the biggest influences in my paintings, particularly with my older children's books. *A Child's Good Morning* gave me the perfect opportunity to use that style of art

I immediately started researching animals and how they were illustrated by some of my favorite folk artists. Eventually I created a style to work in, mostly collage. Then I got to do one of my favorite things, which is sort through my vast library of handmade papers and choose which ones I would use for this book. I also got to shop for some new papers, which is another one of my favorite hobbies.

Much of the text for the book takes place outside, and the art required a lot of green for the grass and browns for the earth. I must have collected 20 different papers to use for the grass and earth. In the end I only used two or three. I'm sure though, I will get to use the leftover papers for some future project!

We began with sketches for this book in Jan of 2007 and I turned in the final art Dec of 2007. The book took about five months of painting and many e-mails and j-pegs back and forth between me and Martha and Whitney Manger my editor. We decided to have the text arc and swirl throughout the art, incorporating the text like it was art. I think it adds a graceful fanciful feeling to the book but it did make the placement of all the animals and children have to be very exacting.

The book turned out so beautiful. I am very proud of it and I think the art compliments the text in just the right way. What a great experience!

