



Enchanted Lion Books is the winner of the 2014 (Mildred L.) Batchelder Award for *Mister Orange*, written by Truus Matti and translated by Laura Watkinson. Claudia Zoe Bedrick, publisher and editorial director of Enchanted Lion Books, delivered these acceptance remarks at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 30, 2014, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Batchelder Award, visit <http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.

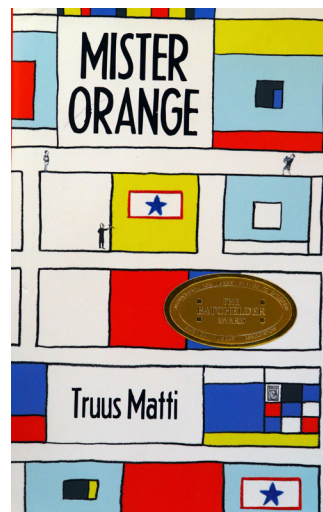


Batchelder

AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good Morning. I am delighted to be here and deeply honored to receive the Batchelder Award for *Mister Orange* by Truus Matti, translated from the Dutch by Laura Watkinson. The Batchelder Committee has my enormous thanks for this recognition and for the honors bestowed on *The Bathing Costume, Or the Worst Vacation of My Life*, written by Charlotte Moundlic and translated from the French by myself, and *My Father's Arms Are a Boat* by Stein Erik Lunde, translated from the Norwegian by Kari Dickson.

To tell you a little bit about Enchanted Lion Books: the idea behind our editorial program of publishing books in translation took root in the 1990s when I worked in the nonprofit world. From 1990-2001, I worked with libraries throughout East & Central Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union as those countries opened up to the West. I traveled a lot for my work and visited with library directors and staff to gather information about collections and to learn how best to assist them in rebuilding their research journal archives after having been cut off from global research and debate, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, for nearly 45 years. Over the course of my travels, I met many librarians, students, and professors, people who spoke eloquently of growing up with British children's books, as well as some from the U.S., and it made me think how wonderful it would be for children here to establish a sense of intimacy with other countries by growing up with stories



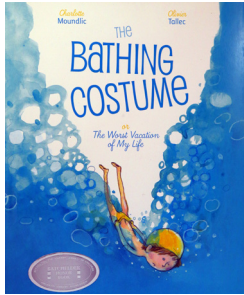
and pictures—with books—from elsewhere and far away.

As for *Mister Orange*: the book came to my attention several years ago when I received an email from its author, Truus Matti. I had become friendly with the Dutch illustrator Wouter van Reek through publishing his picture book, *Coppernickel, The Invention*, and when I opened Truus' email, I learned that it was her husband Wouter who had suggested she write. Truus told me briefly that she was writing a book about Mondrian during his last year in New York City, and she then asked whether I would be able to put her in touch with anyone who had lived in New York City during World War II. I wrote back, curious. As Truus' replies came in, I began to hear her voice and became fascinated by how she was trying to weave together Mondrian's theories of art, ideas about comic books, freedom, and the role of

Enchanted Lion Books is an independent, family-owned publishing company, founded in 2003 and based in Brooklyn, NY. They have published books from authors and illustrators in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Japan, Switzerland, and the US. Enchanted Lion's *Big Wolf and Little Wolf*, written by Nadine Brun-Cosme, illustrated by Olivier Tallec, and translated from the French by Claudia Bedrick, was named a 2010 Batchelder Honor Book.



2014 BATCHELDER HONOR BOOKS

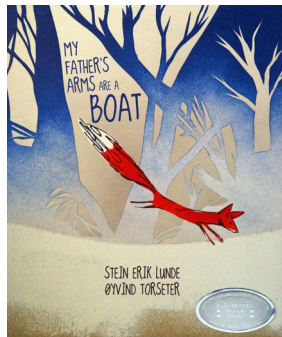


The Bathing Costume, or the Worst Vacation of My Life.

Moundlic, Charlotte.

Illus. by Olivier Tallec and
trans. by Claudia Zoe Bedrick.

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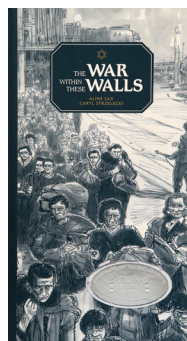


My Father's Arms Are a Boat.

Lunde, Stein Erik.

Illus. by Øyvind Torseter and
trans. by Kari Dickson.

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The War Within These Walls,

Sax, Aline.

Illus. by Caryl Strzelecki and
trans. by Laura Watkinson.

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers

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the imagination in life, while telling the story of a working-class New York City family.

I didn't have much to go on, but I sensed that a bold, yet lyrical, book was in the making, so I put Truus in touch with my uncle, who grew up in New York and was just about 10 or 11, the age of the book's protagonist Linus, in 1943.

A while later, I heard that the manuscript was finished and the Dutch publisher Leopold sent it to me. Unable to read Dutch, I passed the manuscript along to Genevieve Mathis, a writer of Dutch-American parentage living in New York. A few weeks later, I received Genevieve's reader's report, which read so beautifully that it led me right back to Truus' own descriptions of her work. And so, with a deepening sense of the story, I decided to publish the book.

But why, exactly, did I come to that decision? Because I already had the strong sense that *Mister Orange*, like all of the books I love best, was subversive and bold in the high value it places on creativity and individuality, and that Truus herself belonged to that wonderful order of writers who have not forgotten what it is like to be a child.

When I was finally able to read the book, I discovered that Truus had indeed succeeded in rendering a believable, independent-minded American boy with an authentic inner world.

As I read, I was astonished to discover that not only did the story draw me into the white sparseness of Mondrian's tranquil New York City apartment and the beautiful moments and conversations that *Mister Orange* and Linus share therein, but it also was as if it was opening an entirely new room within my own imagination.

For while *Mister Orange* is a wonderful book about a time and a place, and a lovely coming of age story, it is also a kind of manifesto for the claims of the imagination and like every worthwhile book it translates life itself into a story that opens up whole new rooms and realms of feeling within us.

It is true that the publication of every truly good book is a cause for celebration, and yet it is also true that books from elsewhere and far away don't just give us more good stories. Far more crucially, they give us perspectives and experiences that we might otherwise never have had. For reading books from other countries and from writers formed within and against those cultures gives all of us—and this is so incredibly important for young readers—the chance to develop a more nuanced and more inclusive view of the world, a view extending far beyond both the mental and physical boundaries of one's own culture.

As Laura Watkinson, the wonderful translator of *Mister Orange*, has framed it: Truus' story is a great example of how works in translation are not simply about languages but also about cultures. The book, based on a Dutch artist who lived in New York in the 1940s, was written by a modern-day Dutch author who lives in Amsterdam. It was translated into English by a British translator who also lives in Amsterdam, and edited and published in English by an American who lives in Brooklyn. Mondrian's story has traveled a long way, both in years and distance, since 1943 in New York City, and having passed through Truus Matti's imagination and navigated some cultural shifts, the artist's tale has found its way back to New York and to a new generation of young readers.

Readers who, thanks to the visibility bestowed by the Batchelder Award, will



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have the chance to discover this unusual story of an American boy and a modern European artist who are thrown together by life and bound together by their shared belief that dreams and stories are just as vital a part of reality as the empirical world around us, and that it's the dreams we sustain and the stories we tell that make and remake the world.

Again, my heartfelt thanks to the ALSC and the 2014 Batchelder Committee, chaired by Maureen White, whose passion and commitment to exploring as many translated works as possible has been enormously encouraging. I also would like to thank the members of the committee, each of whom has done so much to advocate for a true global literature and for the publication of books in translation for young readers.

Moreover, I would like to thank USBBY and the many librarians who do so much to support the publication of books from other countries and cultures. In a very significant sense, it is that support that keeps publishers from giving up on their search for world-making, life-changing stories from elsewhere and far away. Thank you so much.



For more information about the Batchelder Award, visit <http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.

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