

2C ■ FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2017 ■ DETROIT FREE PRESS

Little Golden Books art comes to Dearborn



Julie Hinds
Columnist
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

“The Poky Little Puppy.” “Home for a Bunny.” “Tootle.” From baby boomers to post-millennials, Little Golden Books have been read, clutched, hugged, scribbled on, chewed and loved by children all generations.

To celebrate this year’s 75th anniversary of Little Golden Books, an awesome exhibit of art is running now through Dec. 17 at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Tucked inside the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery at the Mardigian Library, it features 65 original drawings for Little Golden Books from an array of famous illustrators, including Garth Williams, Richard Scarry and Margaret Wise Brown.

This Friday, the history and genius of the classic book line will be the topic of guest speaker Diane Muldrow at a free reception. She edits the Little Golden Books, which now have a home at Random House.

Muldrow also is the author of best-selling spin-offs for grown-ups, like her latest, “Everything I Need to Know About Family I Learned from a Little Golden Book.” Consider it the perfect prep for your Thanksgiving dinner.

Here, edited for length and clarity, is a conversation with Muldrow that could make you feel like a kid again.



This Garth Williams illustration appeared in “Baby Animals,” a Little Golden Book from 1953. RANDOM HOUSE

QUESTION: I’m looking at the Little Golden Books titles and practically crying, because I remember each one of them. Is this the typical response when people talk about them, that it’s very emotional?

ANSWER: Yes. I wrote a piece for Huffington Post a few years ago and I think I said that whenever I say what I do for a living, the response is always, “Awwwww!” And then the person tells me what their favorite Little Golden was. It’s happened over and over and I love it. I never get tired of it.

Q: Now we take it for granted how beautiful children’s books can be. Were the Golden Books pioneers of this?

A: They really were. They launched in 1942,

during the height of America’s involvement in World War II. People needed some comfort on the home front. It was a time of hardship and rationing. Not every small town had a library. But Little Golden Books came around and they were only 25 cents. This was really revolutionary, because, at that time, children’s books were basically a luxury item. They weren’t as ubiquitous as they are now.

Q: I always had a sense as a kid that Little Golden Books were made just for me, that I didn’t need an adult to read it or interact with it. It was a really personal relationship. Is that something that’s made them special?

A: Yeah. It’s a little thing that’s a big thing, the fact that they had a nameplate. Little Golden Books were really about pride of ownership. They were often the first books children had of their own. They were durable and strong and meant to be loved. It really felt like yours because you wrote your name in it. And how does that not foster a love of reading?

Q: How do you view your responsibility today to Golden Books? Now they’re hip enough to have Grumpy Cat in them.

A: I take it very seriously. I reissue old titles each year, but I also publish a lot of new titles, some of which I’ve written. I want to make sure that the new books have the same classic feel and inspire the same love that the vintage ones do. The art has to be fresh and new, yet it can’t easily date. It’s the same with the content. It has to have a cozy feel or a fun storytelling

Little Golden Books editor Diane Muldrow

5 p.m. Fri.

Family Afternoon with Little Golden Books

1-4 p.m. Nov. 18

Little Golden Books exhibit at the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery

Exhibit runs through Dec. 17

Mardigian Library on the campus of University of Michigan-Dearborn

<https://library.umd.umich.edu>

Events are free

style. It has to feel like a modern classic.

Q: I just found online the Tiny Golden Books set of 36 miniature books, which I had as a child and treasured. I wish I hadn’t worn it to pieces, because it’s selling now for \$800.

A: Yeah, that’s the problem. We wore those little books to shreds. We should have (bought) an extra one that we kept apart from everything. But nobody did that.

Contact Detroit Free Press pop culture critic Julie Hinds: 313-222-6427 or jhinds@freepress.com.