

I was a child who lived in the books I read. I was always reading or drawing. As a visual person, I saw myself in them. Books were a path to other worlds. They fed me knowledge and freed my imagination.

Making the “Library of My Childhood Dreams” was just so much fun. I had a vision of curling up on the little chair on a cold, rainy day and watching characters come to life. The more I thought about which books mattered to me as I was growing up, the more I wanted to add. (In fact, I dropped this off only a few days after starting to avoid over crowding it with all the books that mattered. If I didn’t, it would have had to extend over multiple rooms.) I did edit it down to some of the many books of my toddler through elementary school years. Making this stirred up many childhood memories connected to what I read.

Books remain an important part of my life. Reading is still a safe space in troubled times; my personal transportation system to learn about and navigate this world, travel to other realities, and maintain a sense of wonder and freedom that I can incorporate into my artwork.

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Arlene Gale Milgram, painter, mixed-media artist and educator, is a graduate of the Tyler School of Art. Her work is in many private and public collections including: The Newark Museum, Mercer County Cultural Heritage Commission, Alergan Corporation, Museum of Encaustic Art and Temple Judea Museum. She received a 2024 fellowship from the NJ State Council on the Arts. She is a fellow and grantee of the Dodge Artist/Teacher Initiative. Solo exhibitions include: Ellarslie (the Trenton City Museum), Mercer County Community College, Silva Gallery, Nassau Club, SUNY College of Optometry, and the Arts Council of Princeton.

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