

Where Does Your Yellow Brick Road Lead?

While recently rummaging through some of my childhood artifacts, I was reminded of my early obsession with the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. Now 30 years old, I have been reflecting upon my relationships to Dorothy, the Yellow Brick Road, and the Ruby Slippers, and how my relationship to them has evolved during the last 25 years.

For the first time I recently completed L. Frank Baum's 14 books about Dorothy's adventures in Oz. And what I have discovered is that I admire Dorothy's willpower and sense of self. Young Dorothy Gale is ripped away from the desolate, gray farmstead in Kansas. Each problem she encounters teaches her about the interconnectivity of duty, friendship, family, and community. At first she wears magical silver shoes and travels the yellow brick road with the singular destination of home as her mission. But the more she travels the yellow brick road, the more adamant she is about standing up for what she believes is right and true: notions she first learned on the farm. I too grew up on a farm (albeit a very green one). As I have traveled and moved around the country, the connection to my childhood farm has become more sacred. Yet like Dorothy, while the farm is the foundation for my yellow brick road, it has led me to expand my definition of family, home, and self.



Where does your yellow brick road lead? calls on the viewer to think about their relationship to the cultural icon of Oz. For me, the famed yellow brick road is not just sedentary street with a fixed destination. It is a metaphor for life, a pathway that each of us continually works very hard to build during our lifetime. There are bumps, scratches, twists, turns, broken pieces, and a lack of uniformity. And yet it is through the process of building a yellow brick road we realize that a destination may be something we strive for, but it is the adventures along the path that are self-defining.

*Image of the artist, 1988, Colton, Oregon.