

As artists, we all want to leave behind a legacy. We want to inspire new generations to come. And the selfish side of us demands to have our work to last for all of time. Between sold out children's books to being an interictal part of cinematic history, Gustaf Tenggren *has* reached that level of fame. Tenggren shows us there is no "peak" to be reached. He shows us that artists are just as important as inventors or scientists in the pages of history. I wonder, if Tenggren never left Sweden, how different would our world be?

Born in 1896, Gustaf Tenggren grew up in the Swedish countryside. When Tenggren was young his father left the family and he was raised by his Mother and Grandfather. His Grandfather was a huge influence on his artistic passion. In Sweden, Tenggren's natural talent awarded him scholarships to study at art school. By the 1920s Tenggren was in America and was making waves. "He created illustrations for the Cleveland Plain Dealer and show posters for a vaudeville theater, made fashion drawings and window displays for a department store, and worked for a commercial art studio, producing magazine and advertising art. (Mortensen)" In 1935, Tenggren became a part of something so new and so advanced that critics today still sing of its regalia. Tenggren was asked to join Walt Disney in the creation of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Tenggren's legacy can be seen in the development of the Dwarfs' house and the natural environment. His concept work was the launch pad of the Disney enterprise. But the movie that cemented Tenggren's name in history was his work on Pinocchio. You can see elements of his homeland and experiences in the background and environment of the film. Tenggren worked with Disney up until the start of the movie Bambi in 1939. "Tenggren eventually left the Disney studio because of artistic differences with Walt Disney. (Apatoff)" In 1940, Tenggren started to publish his own collections of children's books. They were collections of fairy tales and folk stories from his childhood and classics. Tenggren also signed a contract to work with The Little Golden Books in the 1940s to the 1960s. Tenggren was responsible for the best-selling children's book *The Poky Little Puppy*. "*The Poky Little Puppy* was a runaway success. By 2001, Publishers Weekly declared it the best-selling children's book of all time, with nearly 15 million copies sold worldwide in many languages. (Mortensen)" In 1970, Tenggren lost his battle with lung cancer. He was inducted into the Society of Illustrators in 2017.

Tenggren's legacy is something to be admired and will prove to stand the test of time. I remember growing up with his books. That feeling of nostalgia and innocence is what drew me into Tenggren's work. His color palette and soft linework is very pleasing to the eye. He really loved to use more curved lines and soft edges. His illustrations didn't have the detail work like Pyle or Wyeth, but it wasn't quite graphic arts either. The word "soft" keeps circling in my head when I look at his work. Even in his concept work for Disney, there is a fluid motion to his environmental work. I don't want to call it cartoonish either, but that is what his work looks like. His work definitely is geared towards children and that imaginative land.

In the end, the world would absolutely look different without Gustaf Tenggren's artistic impression. His work has had a lasting impact. He helped to shape the look of Disney. His children's books have defined the imagination of generations. Tenggren's work is the true definition of what it means to leave behind a legacy.

## Work Cited

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