

This diorama is a tribute to the quiet, transformative power of reading, a power I first discovered as a child and carry with me throughout my life as both an artist and storyteller.

Growing up, books offered endless places to explore, each a portal into the lives and thoughts of others. Sitting in a chair that was always a little too big for me, I would open a book and feel the walls around me fall away. In their place emerged oceans, gardens, distant cultures, and a path to my possible future. I was both grounded and transported, safe in my own space yet free to travel anywhere.

The welcoming armchair invites you to settle in where it all begins and imagination takes hold. The word “Magic” on the pillow is not decorative but declarative, expressing the sentiment shared by Alice Hoffman: “Books may be the only true magic.” For me, that magic was real, expanding my understanding of the world and revealing something simple but profound: all lives are not the same as my own.

The bookshelf holds 26 miniature books, each opening into a different world, from “Planets” to “Secrets” to “Dreams.” Together, they represent the vast range of knowledge, imagination, and human experience accessible through reading. One book, “My Story,” rests on the arm of the chair, suggesting the natural growth from reader into storyteller. It leads you to create your own and to listen more deeply to others.

On top of the bookshelf sits a small red origami crane, inspired by something I once learned from a book. A quiet transformation takes shape as what is read becomes what is made. Delicate yet purposeful, the crane gives flight to imagination.

The painted tree offers shelter and memory. It recalls the stories I was told as a child, often imagined beneath a canopy of branches, evoking a sense of safety, growth, and belonging. The surrounding landscape softens the boundaries of the room, suggesting how reading opens possibility. On the side panel, the word “WONDER” surrounded by points of sparkle, captures the emotional core of the experience: curiosity, awe, and discovery.

As Frederick Douglass reminds us, “Once you learn to read you will be forever free,” a truth woven throughout this piece. Reading opens a pathway to understanding, empathy, and lives beyond our own.

Ultimately, this is an invitation to pause, open a book, and enter a space where imagination unfolds and the impossible becomes possible.

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Geneva Anastasio’s work continues to be shaped by a spirit of exploration first sparked through reading. In *Faces, Places, Unexpected Stories*, a collaborative exhibit, she introduced her “My People” sculptures—figures accompanied by stories reflecting both individuality and shared humanity. She is currently developing, in collaboration with Joy Chen, a series of life-size trees, each rooted in its own passage through time and carrying the people and stories it holds.