Tree of Life // A Healing Space
In early March, participants in *What Worlds Do You Want To Create?*, a continuing education class at the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS), convened to create a contained new world in the Juanita Kreps Gallery at CDS. This was to be an experiment. We each brought what we had and tried to create a synthesis. We spent the first several class sessions building a collective tree of life that brought together our individual sites of healing. We struggled with found objects to build something that would be structurally sound and authentic to a collective vision. The piece continued to evolve throughout our time together.

Life happened to all of us during these months. We experienced health struggles, travels between coasts, vacations, work obligations, and transformative life events.

Riffing on the idea of sites of healing, each person took on a section of the space to build their own multi-dimensional story.

We are happy to invite you into this experiment with us.

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Special Thanks

This installation was made possible with the magic and direction of Courtney Reid-Eaton.

Thank you to Courtney, April, and CDS for the space and the opportunity to try something new.

Facilitated by
Mendal Diana Polish
Lisa Suzanne Turner (El Suze)
The pieces include:

1. *Poem of Spaces*
   Matt Navey
   This piece explores what constitutes a poetry collection, the line between space and poetry, and the space we create for precious objects. it’s fun. have fun.

2. *Ancestors of Ancestors*
   Mendal Diana Polish
   My nana (my mother’s mother) had a hard time finding her place in the world. She found refuge in prayer that called in her ancestors. I am constantly exploring ways to connect with her and hers/ours.
3. **Inner Sanctum**  
   Angie Vorhies  
As I child I loved enclosed spaces and trees. I built forts out of blankets and climbed trees as high as I could go, until I was safely hidden in the canopy. I still look up to trees and feel awed in their presence. I look to them for inspiration, for they are both rooted and rising. Individual trees live half as long as trees in forests. Trees have much to teach about interconnectedness and how to survive as a species on this earth.

4. **Matrilineal Ancestral Altar**  
   Courtney Reid-Eaton  
My grandmother’s family is a tight-knit clan; seven of her nine siblings survived to adulthood, and I knew six of them intimately. My mother was the youngest and feistiest of the Peters first cousins. She was also the one who, until her death in August 2017, kept them connected. At fifteen, my grandfather immigrated alone from St. Kitts to New York City on a Merchant Marine ship. In Harlem he reunited with his father and met the love of his life. Maude Evelyn Peters, Wilmont Celkirk McFarlane Nichols, Lorraine Yvonne Nichols. I miss them every day. I Love them every day. I say their names every day. Every day, I ask for our brokenness to be repaired.
5. **Ugly Ain’t Me**  
Lisa Suzanne  
Failure is inevitable in this life, as a black queer woman the world loves to show me the ugly side: their hate, judgment, misconceptions, all while pouring disappointment over my body like hot oil. is the wooden forest of doubt and failure in which the soul goes to heal, strengthen, and return with a mouth full of TOLERANCE!

6. **And So the Sea Shall Carry My Mother**  
Mara Guevarra  
Chosen to speak of the Outside within the MA-13 Destiny Collective, artist Ranran constructs an altar to honor her deceased mother and share both memory and culture. Multimedia, 2079.
7. **The Tree of Life**
   
   Our collective site of healing

   The Tree of Life is an ancient idea that has spanned many cultures. It has become a common symbol of life, ancestry, mythology, lessons of the spirit, history, lineage, hope for the future, and reaching to the heavens. It expresses Air or Breath of Spirit, which inspires; roots provide foundation, the trunk, stability; branches—growth—are pathways for nourishment to leaves, for healing, and fruit, for new life.

8. **Amusements**
   
   April Walton

   This work explores the concept of amusements and public spectacle. I’m wondering what elements change and remain over time. What are the elements of public spectacle—shock, and awe?

   The audience is thinking, “Oh, how terrible! I’m glad that isn’t happening to me.” As the trapeze artist slips from the wire or the fire is swallowed, “Oh, look!”