La Femme
– from Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas/Testimony Against Gertrude Stein, 2011 (ink on handmade paper, coated in pulverized rose petals) by Diane Samuels

BY NICOLE MIYASHIRO

After “Rings of Pink, Enheduanna,” I wrote another poem for Diane Samuels’ 2011 artwork, Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas/Testimony Against Gertrude Stein. This follow-up is a found poem, made up of 16 lines pulled from both Stein’s autobiography, published in 1933, and the many lines Samuels transcribed in her art piece. I wanted to participate in transcribing words as a way to honor and channel the energy Samuels dedicated to handwriting over 200 pages in her work. I also wanted to honor Stein, so imitated the repetitive styles I found in her essay “A Sweet Tail (Gypsies)” and short fiction “As a Wife has a Cow: A Love Story.” When selecting the 16 lines from the autobiography, I pulled mostly from a scene that depicts Stein assessing artwork. My cyclical approach was very purposeful – and enmeshed with thoughts on social attitudes towards women loving women and a goal to create something new.