Rings of Pink, Enheduanna
— for 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

First, tree rings came to mind – then femininity and the female body – these were my quick impressions of Diane Samuels’ 2011 artwork titled: Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas/Testimony Against Gertrude Stein. As I read about Samuels’ method of transcribing written works to handmade paper “coated with pulverized hybrid rose petals,” as its description stated, I thought about origins, not just of the writing materials referenced: paper and ink, but also the physical act of writing. To incorporate origin themes and feminist themes into one poem, I recognized the world’s earliest known author, an ancient Mesopotamian woman named Enheduanna. I began thinking of her as the Mother of Writing in this poem and, along with Mother Earth (whose body bears written evidence of changing climates), the two seemed fitting tributes to the undeniable breadth of female legacies. The enjambment form, a running-over of sentences from one line to the next, provided a solution for how to merge these various themes, as well as a compliment to the circular nature of Samuels’ artwork.