

The Figured Surface

by Gary Hardaway

Incise the stone.
Imprint the clay.
Stain papyrus intelligibly
if not intelligently.

Memory can't be trusted
without reminders and notes
whose symbols
must be remembered.

Number the herd. Number
the baskets after harvest.
Note the reappearance of the moon
after its short absence.

Record the victory, lament the defeat.
Sing in ink across the page
of the body's beauty and terror.
Map where monsters be.

Show with calculations
the equivalence of mass and energy,
the curvature of time.
Distill your understanding

to images and signs.
Trust that someone afterward
will read and learn
what you found meaningful.

