

Existential Dioramas

by Gary Hardaway

What's the Art Good For

but a stroke or two
against impassive
destroyer, Time?

Solvent Time, implacable
sedimentary Time,
eraser of empires,

burier of worlds.
Here is the newest
fragment of Sappho

and there, a whole new
cracked tablet of Gilgamesh
and, under foot,

dark caves waiting
with their unseen pigments
adorning forgotten walls.

Contingencies

There is no understanding
only a striving against odds
to understand. Despite

whatever faith you have,
understanding is provisional,
contingent upon attention

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and the strength of knowing
how little can be known
by two selective eyes, two

imperfect ears, and nerve ends
that still feel the missing limb.
Flavors and odors confuse

and fail with a head-cold
or fever. Trust nothing
but trial and error and a

blind faith in perseverance.
Trudge on, citizen. Surely
knowledge you can trust

for the ever diminishing
span of your life
will show itself.

Alien

Imagine the poem as the alien
breaking through the chest
of the unsuspecting host,

fierce but beautiful,
and leaving its host
broken and bleeding.

Clanging on the Bars of the Cage

Will language ever stretch
to let us see and know

particle and wave
in simultaneity?

Will we always stick ourselves
in either this or that

rather than this, that,
and the other?

The cage of pattern is strong.
Fluidity evades me once again.

Absolute Zero

Motion stops- molecular, atomic, particular.
It is, of course, a perfect state, and unachievable.

Approaching it, things get weirder than they are
at normal temperatures. Things get super fluid.

Things get hyper-conductive. Then, nothing happens.
I hover a few degrees above where things

get beautifully strange. At the not quite still point.
At the point where movement is still unavoidable

but very close to a stasis almost inconceivable.
Heat, here, is the enemy and must be turned away.

The flies of consciousness still buzz here.
Old pests refuse to die, despite the cold.

