

ELYTRIFORM

Shaped like a sheath – *elytron* in Greek. An *elytron* functions much like an envelope that simply contains things inserted into it, and it usually conforms closely to the shape of the object it contains – originally a sword or knife. All common beetles are classified as *coleoptera*, a name meaning ‘sheath-winged’. One often wonders what happens to the wings of beetles when they sit still – they don’t seem to have any. When they stop flying, they fold their wings back into a hard, protective cover, the *elytra*, on their backs. When the beetle is therefore not flying, its wings are invisible, protected. Their wings and sheaths are totally aligned and conform fully in shape. Insects capable of growing new *elytra* on their bodies in place of the old ones are referred to as *elytrigerous*. Some sea-creatures, like crustaceans, have a hard carapace or *elytra* for a shell. The empty, holster-type sheath of the BLIND ALPHABET project is made out of Imbuia in June 2007.

ENSIFORM

Centuries ago it was fashionable to call a sword-bearing person *enisiferous*, from Latin *ensis* 'sword'. The sword lily or *gladiola*, for example, has decidedly *ensiform* leaves, and its name, *gladiola*, comes from *gladius*, another Latin name for sword. Sword fighters are *gladiators*. An *ensiform* or *ensate* item has the shape of a sword. The lower breastbone or sternum, is aptly named the *ensiform* cartilage because it ends like a straight-pointed broad-sword. The word is most commonly used to describe the shapes of certain leaves, especially the leaves of lilies, pineapples and reeds. One curious *ensiform* structure is located at the war memorial "Wars of America" in Military Park, Newark, New Jersey. The walkway in front of the statues is so large one can only see its *ensiform* profile from the air. The main shaft of the *ensiform* shape of the BLIND ALPHABET project was made of Imbuia and clad with Beech in June 2007.

ECHINOID

Resembling a sea urchin, or belonging to their family – properly called *Echinus*. Sea urchins are called *echinids* or *echinoids*. In Latin, an *echinatus* is a ‘sea urchin’, named after *echinus*, the hedgehog. The word *urchin* itself was first applied to porcupines and hedgehogs and later described the urchins – those small, round, spiky, pumpkin-shaped sea-creatures. The word *urchin* is also used for a goblin or elf because it was believed that these mischievous demons can change into hedgehogs to avoid detection. In *echinology* scientists study the *Echinoidea* or sea urchins. The pansy shells of South Africa are also urchins. *Echinologists* have a vast task with the 950 living species and about 5000 recognised fossil species of *Echinoidea*. The *echinoid* shape for the BLIND ALPHABET, made in June 2007, shows the sea urchin without its spines, as a kind of sea shell commonly known as a little pumpkin. Note how the segments accentuate the annual rings of the Oregon Pine. The base is of Imbuia.

ECHINO-COSTATE

For this object the spines of the sea-urchin were studied. They appear to be in a random, untidy bundle on top of the small segments from which they sprout – much like the spines on a hedgehog. A chestnut, for example, because of its outward likeness to these is truly *echinuliform*. In fact, the sea urchin gets its Latin name *echinatus*, from that of the hedgehog, *echinus*. The prickles, spines and teeth of many animals, fishes and plants have been compared to the prickles of urchins and hedgehogs. A surface with striations of prickles is *echinulato-striate*. An *echino-dentate* arrangement of teeth or fish bones occur in a row, or many rows, like teeth. The structure for the BLIND ALPHABET was made in June 2007. A long ridge of sharp spines were arranged like fish bones in the backbone of a fish – and in that sense the structure is *echino-costate* – in Latin *costa* is ‘rib’. The centre of the main body of the backbone is of Imbuia and its sides are Beech. Fourteen pairs of pine ‘ribs’, tipped with Saligna wood, are grafted into the Beech.

ENANTIOMORPHIC

In *enantiosis* we express ourselves in irony – we say exactly the opposite of what we mean, often in sarcastic fashion – in Greek *enantios* is ‘contrary’ or ‘opposite’. In looking at certain objects we might find that their appearances are opposite or *enantiomorphic* of one another. The image we see in the mirror is *enantiomorphic* of our own real image and we cannot easily read a written sentence reflected in a mirror because it is *enantiomorphically* displayed – everything is similar, yet backwards and opposite. An *enantiomorphic* item is not a repeat of itself – it is the exact opposite of itself. One will find *enantiomorphism* when one compare one’s left hand, thumb-to-thumb, to one’s right hand. Two left hands are not *enantiomorphic* to each other because they are identical in every way. The *enantiomorphic* shapes made in June 2007 for the BLIND ALPHABET are two twists of Tambotie wood that, at face value, look exactly the same, but actually contradict each other if placed in mirrored geometry.

ENNEAHEDRAL

If a crystal is cut and polished to have nine faces it is *enneahedral* – in Greek *ennea* is ‘nine’ and *hedra* ‘face’. An *enneacontahedral* precious stone like a diamond or sapphire has ninety facets. A flat, coin-like shape that has nine angles on it is called *enneagonal*. An *enneatic* event will take place once every nine years. So, if one has *enneatic* visits from an uncle for the rest of ones life, one would have seen him only nine times by the time one turns ninety. When a pyramid on a flat base has nine triangles meeting at the same point, it is called an *enneaedral* pyramid. The shape made in July 2007 for the BLIND ALPHABET PROJECT is not a pyramid, rather, it alludes to a very simple kind of stone that might be found, mounted on a ring. Note the difference in spelling of *enneaedral* and *enneahedral*. The configuration consists of nine different shapes that fit together in a kind of puzzle with nine faces like a polished crystal. The white and dark brown contrasts of the Tambotie wood are there to put sighted people off from finding the pieces.

ESTOILÉE

In modern French a star is an *étoile*. The commonly accepted term for a heraldic star is *estoile* or *estoil*. All stars, whether they have many rays or few are *estoiles*. It is common practice in heraldry to draw some *estoiles* with five or six wavy rays. The star selected for the BLIND ALPHABET is the star-shaped symbol of the cross called *crux estoilée*. Unlike most other heraldic stars, the star of the cross has only four wavy rays and is broad in the centre. The southern cross is not a *crux estoilée* because it is a configuration formed by various stars rather than a single star. Many believed that the wise men in the second chapter of Saint Matthew, saw the sign of the cross in the star that led them to the new-born Christ. Thus the symbolism of the *crux estoilée* came about. In August 2007 the project's *crux estoilée* was stylised out of eight different layers of wood with the individual pieces on each of the legs fragmented into small jagged and geometric shapes. The height of this star decreases step by step from its centre towards its points.

EVECTION

A lifting up, a divergence or a veering away from the direction in which movement takes place – in Latin *evehere* is ‘to carry out’, from *vehere* ‘to carry’. A tube is *everted* when its front edge is turned outwards so that its shape begins to resemble the opening up of a trumpet. In an open book *evection* takes place when the pages lift up and fold away on either side of the central spine. Planets show an *evection* in their orbit when they veer away from their predicted path, likewise bullets undergo an *evection* when they swerve off course. A graph showing the steady financial progress of a company follows an *evection* in its ascending curve and an aeroplane takes off in an *evection* that describes the safest possible gradient. The sculpture for the BLIND ALPHABET, made in August 2007, has a firm square base made of oak upon which a curved piece of Sapele Mahogany is mounted to describe an upward *evection*, away from the base, much like the trajectory of an aeroplane leaving a runway.

ENHENDEE

An heraldic term that describes a cross as having its arms shaped like staffs fitted with handles to lean on – in old French *enheundée* is ‘having a handle’. Each arm of the *cross enhendee* ends in two curved handles with a spear-point between them. Another cross that has arms shaped like a crutch or walking stick is the *cross potentee*. In old French a *potence* is ‘staff fitted with a cross-piece to lean upon’. The words *potent* and *potence* also mean ‘crutch’ or ‘walking stick’ in English, but are hardly ever used. The arms of the *cross potentee* end in simple cross-bars like the letter ‘T’, whilst the endings of the arms of the *cross enhendee* split up in a more complex and ornate design. The *cross enhendee* is often the proud symbol of pilgrims who travel on foot – the implication being that the cross of Christ provides support and comfort in one’s journey through life. The staff-like elements of the *cross enhendee* in the *BLIND ALPHABET PROJECT* were made in August 2007 of Imbuia. Inlaid between all the recurved staff handles are short spear points of Sapele Mahogany.

EPHIPPOID

Shaped like a horse's saddle – in Greek *ephippium* is 'saddle' from *epi-* 'upon' and *hippos* 'horse'. To *ephippate* a horse is to put a saddle on its back. The *ephippium* process is a little saddle-shaped dimple in a bone at the base of the human skull. One British breed of pig noted for its striking colour marking of a single white belt, of varying thickness, on a black body, is called the saddleback pig. A species of New Zealand wattlebird, now found only on a few small islands, is known locally as the saddleback, named after the chestnut 'saddle' of colour on its otherwise black back. The most common *ephippoid* form in nature is that of saddleback mountains and hills, although they are never really referred to as *ephippoid*. Many towns, churches, farms and other places carry the name 'Saddleback' because they are on or near such a saddleback mountain. One can only appreciate the distinctive saddle-like shape of such mountains from a fair distance. The *ephippoid* shape for the BLIND ALPHABET PROJECT, made in September 2007, has a base of *Imbuia*, a body of African rosewood and a saddle-knob to the front of Beech.

“A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.” – Gloria Steinem

“All men are equal before fish.” Herbert Hoover

“A feminist uses statistics like a fish uses a bicycle.” – Christina Hoff Sommers

“Fishing is boring, unless you catch an actual fish, and then it is disgusting.” – Dave Barry

“It's okay to eat fish because they don't have any feelings.” – Kurt Cobain

“Telling a teenager the facts of life is like giving a fish a bath.” – Arnold H. Glasow