

Martha Madigan, an artist from Philadelphia, is best known for her exquisite solar photograms that refer to, record or transform aspects of nature and the human figure. In service to her interest in working directly with sunlight as content, subject matter, medium, and metaphor, Madigan has explored the history of photographic light sensitive materials from the earliest cyanotype process to the latest in digital color photography.

Madigan studied art education at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and earned an MFA in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Martha Madigan has served as professor and chair of the Photography Department, Tyler School of Art/ Temple University since 1979. She has received numerous awards, grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Temple University, and other organizations.

Her work is exhibited internationally, and is in the collections of museums including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as in private collections and institutions worldwide. Martha Madigan is represented by the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York City, and by Jeffrey Fuller Fine Art, Ltd. in Philadelphia.

Over a period of more than a decade beginning in the early 1980s, Madigan created a series of solar photograms inspired by a rhythmic verse entitled *Rhymes of Animals* that appeared in *The Shaker Manifesto* of July 1882. Madigan named her series of photograms ALEAFABET™ In the 1882 introduction to *Rhymes of Animals*, *The Shaker Manifesto* reported

“A correspondent of the *Cincinnati Gazette* writes, ‘I strung the following rhymes together to tickle the ears of my little boys, four and six years old. They tease their mamma to read it over and over again, and they fetch the big illustrated dictionary to have her point out the funny animals with such strange names and tell what she can about them. This fancy for rhyme and rhythm is, I suppose, a characteristic of nearly all children, and perhaps the publication of this will amuse a wider circle than my little household. The aim has been, after euphony, to have the most incongruous animals in juxtaposition.’”

ALLIGATOR, Beetle, Porcupine, Whale,  
BOBOLINK, Panther, Dragonfly, Snail,  
CROCODILE, Monkey, Buffalo, Hare,  
DROMEDARY, Leopard, Mud Turtle, Bear,  
ELEPHANT, Badger, Pelican, Ox,  
FLYING FISH, Reindeer, Anaconda, Fox,  
GUINEA PIG, Dolphin, Antelope, Goose,  
HUMMINGBIRD, Weasel, Pickerel, Moose,  
IBEX, Rhinoceros, Owl, Kangaroo,  
JACKAL, Opossum, Toad, Cockatoo,  
KINGFISHER, Peacock, Anteater, Bat  
LIZARD, Ichneumon, Honeybee, Rat,

MOCKINGBIRD, Camel, Grasshopper, Mouse,  
NIGHTINGALE, Spider, Cuttlefish, Grouse,  
OCELOT, Pheasant, Wolverine, Auk,  
PERIWINKLE, Ermine, Katydid, Hawk,  
QUAIL, Hippopotamus, Armadillo, Moth,  
RATTLESNAKE, Lion, Woodpecker, Sloth,  
SALAMANDER, Goldfinch, Anglemoth, Dog,  
TIGER, Flamingo, Scorpion, Frog,  
UNICORN, Ostrich, Nautilus, Mole,  
VIPER, Gorilla, Basilisk, Sole,  
WHIPPOORWILL, Beaver, Centipede, Fawn,  
XANTHOS, Canary, Polliwog, Swan,  
YELLOWHAMMER, Eagle, Hyena, Lark,  
ZEBRA, Chameleon, Butterfly, Shark.<sup>1</sup>

With this Abcedarius verse as an underlying thread, ALEAFABET™ incorporates a celebration of the creation of living creatures with the joyful passage of the seasons through the use of foliage and botanical elements. This imaginative, powerful book draws from several universal themes: creation myths, the four seasons, Shaker culture, the vanishing natural world, the healing power of nature, and the garden as a source of joy.

Madigan created these images by means of a multi-step process. The first step was the creation of a photogram, i.e., a photograph made without a camera. The artist would place leaves that she had handpicked onto a light sensitive photographic paper. After she exposed the leaves and paper to the sunlight, the resultant image would be the negative silhouettes of the leaves that would form the shapes of either the animals or the words of the verse. Each image that she created contains all four images or all four names of the animals of one of the twenty-six verses in the poem.

ALEAFABET™ is designed with fifty-two (52) color pages and a two-page introduction, plus title and preliminary pages. The fifty-two pages are comprised of twenty-six spreads (each two pages) illustrating the line of verse for each letter of the alphabet, with a corresponding page illustrating the four various animals described in the line of text. The text pages will be placed on the left side with the animal image pages on the right side.

To see more, please visit <http://marthamadigan.com/>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Shaker Manifesto*, Canterbury, New Hampshire, Vol. XII, No. VII, July, 1882, page 162.

