
Assignment 4 · Connecting with Materials: Cyanotype Photography
Due: Sunday, March 3, 2024

Submit the written component (typewritten, double-spaced, no more than 12pt font size) and a photo of your cyanotype artwork in a single PDF document by 11:59 pm to vsioufas-lalli@ncc.commnet.edu

Create a cyanotype photograph (20 pts) and provide a **formal analysis** and **artist's statement** (30 pts) of your artwork.

Cyanotype photography is a camera-less technique that involves laying an object on paper coated with a light-sensitive solution of iron salts before exposing it to UV light and then washing with water to create white and Prussian blue images. This type of photographic print is also called a ***blueprint***.
The method was invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842 and was pioneered by the illustrator and botanist, Anna Atkins. In 1843, Atkins produced what is known as the first photographic illustrated book, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (if interested see, https://nhm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/view/BookReaderViewer/44NHM_INST/12190875980002081 for access to her book and photos).

Your task here is to create your own *photogram* (camera-less photograph) using the provided 6" x 8" prepared cyanotype paper. The instructions on how to create your photogram are given below.

For inspiration on your composition follow these links to contemporary artists using this medium—*Cove Street Arts Cyanotype Exhibition, 2020-2021@* https://www.covestreetarts.com/exhibitions-1/current-exhibition-cyanotype and to the cyanotypes of acclaimed Iranian photographer, Gohar Dashti @ https://hundredheroines.org/exhibition/gohar-dashti-explores-the-process-of-cyanotypes-in-summer-exhibition/

How to create your own cyanotype—


Photo of my still life composition

a. Pick your specimens. Collect leaves or natural material from your garden or local green space, or find objects around your home.
b. Remove the cyanotype paper from its sleeve, away from sunlight, and place it with the yellowish side up. This is the surface that's sensitive to UV light.
c. Arrange your specimens on the cyanotype paper, again, away from sunlight. Take a photo of your composition.
d. Place your paper with the design in the sun. It can be a clear hot summer's day or a cloudy winter's day, there will still be UV rays that will help the chemical reaction. Earlier in the day between 8 a.m. to noon is the best for strong UV exposure. The amount of time it needs to be left in the sun, however, may vary depending on the time of the year; 30 minutes on a partly sunny winter's day did the trick for me. Evidence of exposure might be subtle or evidently blue in some areas.
e. Once developed enough, take your print inside and keep it out of the sunlight. Take a photo of it. It is now time to rinse your print with water. This will wash off any solution and fix the image so that it will no longer be affected by the sun.
f. Leave your print to dry. Once dry you will be left with your own beautiful cyanotype print.

1. **Bring** your cyanotype print to class for full credit **labeled with your name on Tuesday, March 5.**

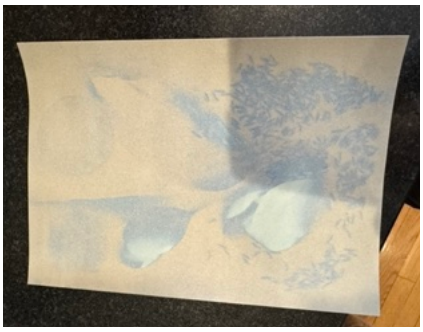

Photo of my cyanotype after 30 minute exposure and before rinsing

2. In response to this process, **submit a 1 to 2 page** (**minimum**) reflection**,** a **formal analysis and an artist's statement** (essay format, type-written, double-spaced, 12 pt font); **introduce your essay with a photo of your finished cyanotype photogram along with a label** (**artist's name** (**that's you**), **title of the work, date, medium, and dimensions**. Include the two photos of your process as well (see examples here).

3. An artist's statement is a piece of writing by you that helps your audience understand your artistic work. It is written in the first person and offers a description of your work and creative process. Here, you'll also offer a **formal analysis**, a description of your work and an explanation of what you wanted to communicate through your composition.

4. **Consider the following questions for your formal analysis:**
   - Introduce your work. Is it representational, abstract, or non-representational? Explain. Use those definitions to help you.
   - What is the subject matter/content for this photograph? (remember Assignment 3: What is Art?)
   - What size is your work? Is it miniature or modest in size, life-sized, over life-sized?
   - What kind of art form is this? Explain it to your reader.
   - Is there any color? Many colors or is your work monochromatic? Explain
   - What shapes are evident in your composition? Geometric, organic, biomorphic?
   - What does the artist emphasize visually? What first attracts your attention? Describe it.
   - How does the artist emphasize this feature/these features? Through scale, directional force, pattern, contrast?
   - How is this work balanced? Is it symmetrical or asymmetrical? Is it dynamic or static?
   - What emotion or idea is being expressed in this work? How can you describe it and how is it being visually communicated? Is the artist successful in doing so?
   - What purpose does this artwork fulfill? Explain

Valerie Sioufas-Lalli
Fleeting Textural #2
February 2024
Cyanotype
6" x 8"

5. **Consider the following questions for your artist's statement:**
   - What was the inspiration for your composition?
   - What materials did you use and why? How did these materials work for you?
   - What is your reaction to working with this medium? Any difficulties? Any surprises?
   - What were your thoughts going into this and how did you feel about this process at the end of it? (expressing frustration is OK)
   - Is this a medium you would work with again? Why or why not?

You **are not** being graded on your artistic abilities. I will be looking for effort here and your response to working with materials. Enjoy the creative process and really think about the artists who worked and are working with this art form. In this case, that's also you!

NOTE: If you really enjoy photograms, know that you can buy the chemicals for cyanotypes online to create your own light sensitive papers. Additionally, another photogram process to consider using natural materials is the ***anthotype*** also developed in the 19th century. An anthotype is an image created using photosensitive material from plants under the influence of light. For more information and to create an anthotype using turmeric, see the article from *Popular Science* here– https://www.popsci.com/diy/anthotype-guide/ and, check out this short video that offers a simple method to creating turmeric anthotypes at home too– www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU-NwhSsh7Q

The history of photography lives on…enjoy!