



THE ANALOGUE LABORATORY

IMPROVISER'S CYANOTYPE KIT



instructions for making cyanotype photograms and prints

Your kit contains

- cyanotype solutions A & B
- plastic syringes
- paper samples
- hake brush
- amber mixing jar

You will also need

- to read all these instructions before starting
- a dimly-lit, clean workspace
- a heavy sheet of clean glass
- a flat board, roughly the same size as your glass
- some large negatives (to make positive prints) or flatish objects (to make photograms)
- sunshine (inside by a window will do nicely, but outside is fastest)
- a baking tray or dish big enough to hold your paper

Note

Cyanotype solution will only work for about 1 week after it's been mixed up. Keep this in mind when making your solution - a little bit goes a long way. Once mixed the solution will stain anything porous, so please be careful.

1. Mix up the goo

Use the plastic syringe to put equal amounts of Solution A and Solution B into the mixing jar. Put the lid on and place the jar in a cool dark place for an hour or overnight to 'ripen'. If you try to use the solution right away you won't be able to get a nice, deep blue.

2. Coat the paper

In your dimly-lit workspace coat a piece of the paper using the hake brush and the solution you mixed up in step 1. Try not to leave any puddles - these will be a deeper colour than the rest of the paper. Ideally you will have a nice even coating. You can brush the solution over the paper until you are happy. Let the paper dry. You may use a hairdryer on a low setting to speed this up. The area of the paper you have coated will be a yellowy-green colour.

For really, really deep blues you can add another coat of solution over the first one. Be sure to dry thoroughly between coats.

3. Smoosh it all together

Place your dry, coated paper face up on your board. Assemble your flat objects or negative on top.

Place the glass over the top of your creation, the glass will hold the objects or negatives firmly against the paper. Time for the sunshine!

4. The Sun

Place your board, glass and paper sandwich in a sunny position. If you are exposing indoors keep in mind that some glass has UV inhibitors, which will slow things down.

At first the coated areas of the paper were green, but they will quickly turn blue in the sunshine. Be patient! The colour will continue to change to a greeny-brown, and finally a grey colour. Grey is what we are after.

While you are waiting for your print to expose, fill up the baking dish with water. This is your wash bath - you can do the next steps anywhere you like, dim light is no longer required.

5. Washing and drying

When you feel your print has exposed in the sun for long enough, undo the contact frame and take out your paper. Areas of the print that didn't get exposed will still be green, some bits will be blue and others grey. The wash bath will make all the colours change again!

Float the paper right side down in the wash bath. Leave it there until the green areas have washed away entirely. If there are some purple bits it could use a few minutes more - all that should be left is a nice blue.

We're still not done yet! As the paper dries the colours will change further - what might be a light blue now will get lovely and deep. Hang your paper on the washing line to dry.

While you're waiting, how about making another?!



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ideas and inspiration for making cyanotypes

A long time ago....

In the year 1842 to be precise, a man with piercing eyes and curly hair who went by the name Sir John Herschel developed the cyanotype process. He was all kinds of clever and liked to do a bit of 'science' in his spare time, working as an astronomer for his day-job - but it was Herschel's neighbour Anna Atkins who first used the invention to make beautiful cyanotype prints.

Anna collected plant specimens including algae and moss to make exquisite cyanotype photograms. When she had created 389 cyanotype photograms, each of a different species of algae, she bound them all together into a self-published book with handwritten text. This book is now regarded as the very first book illustrated with photographic images. There are only 17 copies of Anna Atkins's book *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* known to exist, and they now change hands for frighteningly large sums of money.

Some other things to try

Plants and photo negatives obviously work really well as cyanotypes - but there's some other ways artists have used the process to make neat stuff.

Use it like paint! Grab a small brush and paint monochromatic landscapes and symbols. Write letters and slogans on cards and posters - what a fancy way to say Happy Birthday.

Make your own digital negatives. It's actually pretty easy to use your computer and printer and some transparency film to make your own negatives. They could be from digital photographs, or a collage, or even using fonts. Keep in mind that the bits that print out black on your transparency will be white on your cyanotype print.

Anything flat is Fair Game. Large sequins, foam stickers - craft stores are often full of things that could be adapted for photograms.

Make shapes out of interfacing, felt, tulle or other semi-opaque fabrics. Cutouts on cardstock can make really interesting cyanotypes, too.

Even more things to try

Cyanotype can also be used on textiles! You'll want a natural fabric with a tight weave like linen, cotton canvas or silk. The process is exactly the same, but can be a bit fiddlier to coat and dry thin fabrics. You can coat the fabric with a brush, or immerse it in cyanotype solution. Remember to let it dry in dim conditions before making your exposures.

Inspirational Googling

These artists have made beautiful cyanotype work - if you're ever stuck for ideas, looking at what others have made can sometimes uncork a whole lot of inspiration.

Christina McFall (Berlin) - uses cyanotype on everything. It's mindblowing.

Christian Marclay (USA) - used cassette tapes to make large-scale photograms. Pretty neat.

Tasha Lewis (USA) - cyanotype installations and soft sculptures of animals and plants

Candace Makowichuk (Canada) - quilted cyanotypes on fabric

Alice Blanch (Australia) - cute little botanical photograms

Thirsty for more?

When you've used up all of your cyanotype solution it's very easy to get some more. The good people at The Analogue Laboratory will be happy to help. You can contact them at hello@analoguelab.com.au, or order through their website at www.analoguelab.com.au, or pop in for a visit and a cup of tea at 154 Angas Street, Adelaide 5000.

Paper is also fairly easy to come by. We recommend Magnani Revere Platinum for making prints from negatives, and Magnani Pescia for making photograms. Somerset Satin is wonderful for both, and a bit easier to find!

Your local art supply shops will have suitable paper - smooth watercolour paper or printmaking paper (but not inkjet printing paper) will usually work really well.