

Cyanotype

**A workshop for beginners
using pre coated papers**



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Notes:

Cyanotype - one of the first attempts at inventing photography

Do you own a camera? Do you like taking pictures? Using cyanotypes pictures were made before most people knew the camera was invented.

A long, long time ago, people did not own cameras. No holiday pictures and no photographs of mum and dad. Cameras and photography was not yet invented.

In the year 1842, that is 170 years ago, before your grandmother's grandmother's grandmother's mother lived there was a man called Sir John Herschel. "Sir" means that he was knighted. He was therefore a very fine English man.

John was one of the men trying to invent photography. They tried many different things, but it took a long time before they found

something that worked. Some techniques were too slow, so the people being photographed got tired of waiting, some were too expensive, so people could not afford being photographed

and some were even poisonous, so the photographer got ill.

But, John discovered cyanotypes. It was a way of making pictures that was cheap, simple and safe. He discovered that you could brush iron compounds on a paper and get a surface sensitive to light and make a photograph. The only thing that was a bit odd with the photographs was that they turned blue.



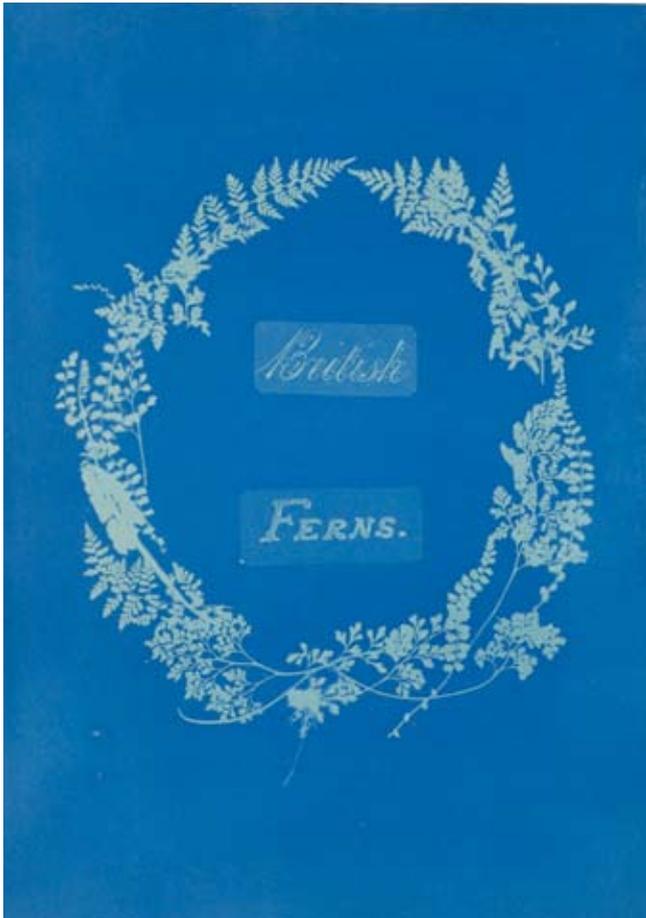
This is J.F.W. Herschel photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron. Julia made four portraits of John at his home in Collingwood, in Kent in England. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Women were not often allowed to invent stuff at that time, their job was to cook, take care of the kids, wash clothes and work. But, a friend of Johns, called Anna Atkins, was a botanist and she used John's cyanotypes to make a book. As a botanist

she documented plants and instead of drawing all the plants, she used cyanotypes to make a picture of what the plant looked like. She made a couple of books, all by hand, and when she did that she was the first person in the world to make a book using photographs. That was in 1843.

After cyanotypes had been used for a while, people invented other ways to take pictures, for example black and white pictures. A lot

of people liked black and white better than blue and white, and cyanotypes were nearly forgotten. Today you have even better ways to make photographs with digital cameras that are both faster and easier. Today cyanotypes are used mostly for making art, or experiment with making pictures. Whatever reason you have to want to explore photography and different techniques, the cyanotype is a creative, relatively safe and exciting process to start with.



Anna Atkins laid plants on cyanotype paper to "photograph" them instead of drawing them. This is the book cover of her book "British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns". Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Above is a picture from Anna Atkins' book. Papaver Orientale; which is Poppy, from "Cyanotypes of British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns". Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Make a picture

In this workshop the paper is already prepared. We have taken two iron compounds called Potassium ferricyanide and Ferric ammonium citrate (the green variety) and mixed them with water and then brushed them onto the paper. Sir John Herschel's original recipe is still used. Today we will print on paper, but you can also print on all sort of natural material like paper, or cloth made of 100% cotton, linen or silk.

The paper has then been dried.

The paper is light sensitive, but just to UV light. UV light exists in the rays of the sun, but also in some lights like those in a sun bed. The paper works like your skin does when you are out in the sun. If you go outside in the sun, you get tanned, even if it takes quite a while. When you put the paper outside in the sunlight it will also change its color. Because of this, you can make your design indoors in ordinary light, without the picture getting ruined.

Photogram

A photogram is when you place objects directly onto the paper and let the rays from the sun make shades and shapes. In the workshop we will be using this method to make a picture.

You can make picture with anything: feathers, cutlery, pearls, lace or anything else that can make an interesting shadow or shape. Photograms are like silhouettes, or shadows the objects leave on the paper.

You can also make pictures using negatives. You will then need quite a large negative, printed out on transparency film. The picture will then be more like a photograph, but blue.

Do this:

1. Remove a paper from the black bag. The black bag will not let light through and will protect the papers. Close the bag carefully, and squeeze the air out of the bag, to make the papers last longer. Stay away from the windows when you make your design, because the paper will change color in the sun. Ordinary lights are fine to work in.
2. Put the paper on a piece of sturdy cardboard or plywood.
3. Start designing your picture. Put different objects on the paper and shape the design like you want it.



4. Once you are done with your design, take a piece of cling film and wrap it around the composition, so the object won't move. If your design is made of paper shapes, a negative or very flat objects, it can be easier to use a sheet of glass to hold the shapes in place.



around 30 minutes.

When the composition is in the sun, the paper will turn dark green. On the picture below you can see that the chemicals on the t-shirt and the paper have different color. The t-shirt has been in the sun long enough to get exposed and is done. The paper still has a yellow-green color since it has just been taken out in the sun.



Make sure to entertain yourself during exposure.

5. Take the composition out in the sun.

Exposing the picture

You will place the picture in the sun for around 20 minutes. If it's cloudy or rainy you can use a UV light instead if you have one. If you are using silk the exposure time is a bit shorter, about 10 minutes and cotton can be longer,



Developing the picture

When the picture has been in the sun long enough you take it inside and remove all the things.

To develop the picture, just rinse it in ordinary tap water, preferably cold. Rinse it for about 5 minutes so that all the chemicals



disappear. If you rinse it for too short time the picture can be destroyed when you take it out in the sun again. When you rinse the picture it turns blue and white.

If you don't have running water where you are you can rinse in a series of buckets. Just make sure you change water often.

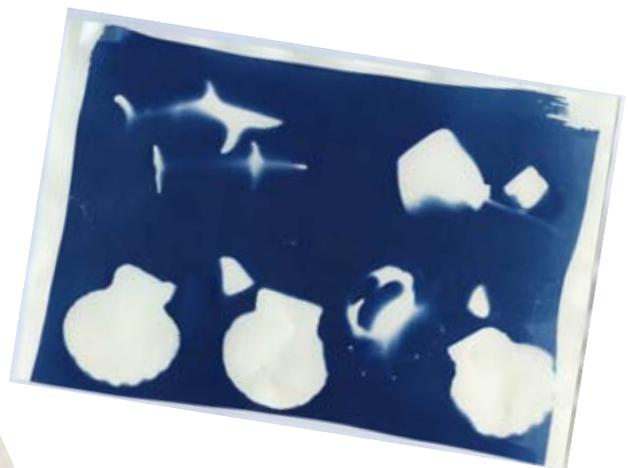


Now the picture is ready to dry. The print may be light blue right now, but within a day it will darken a little.



Washing advice

If you have printed on cloth, for example a t-shirt, a pillow case or a curtain you may need to wash the material. Be careful when you wash it and don't use washing powder containing phosphates. The print will turn yellow. Use a gentle hand wash and wash carefully so you can enjoy your print for a long time.



Make more pictures at home

If you want to **print on cloth or ready made paper**, you can buy this from:

Blue Sunprints in USA:

<http://www.bluesunprints.com/>

They have a large variety of paper and cloth, and they will also make to order.

Blueprints on Fabric in USA:

<http://www.blueprintsonfabric.com/>

They have a large variety of paper and cloth, and they will also make to order.

You can also **buy ready made kits** and coat paper or cloth yourself. Here are some suppliers:

Photographers'

Formulary in USA:

[http://stores.](http://stores.photoformulary.com/)

photoformulary.com/

StoreFront.bok

One kit will be enough for 25 pictures and it comes with instructions.



Silverprint in England:

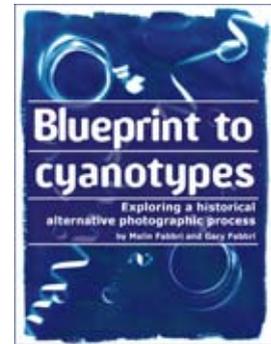
<http://www.silverprint.co.uk/>

Here you can order the chemicals.

More places to order can be found at:

<http://www.alternativephotography.com/wp/directory-of-suppliers/chemicals-kits>

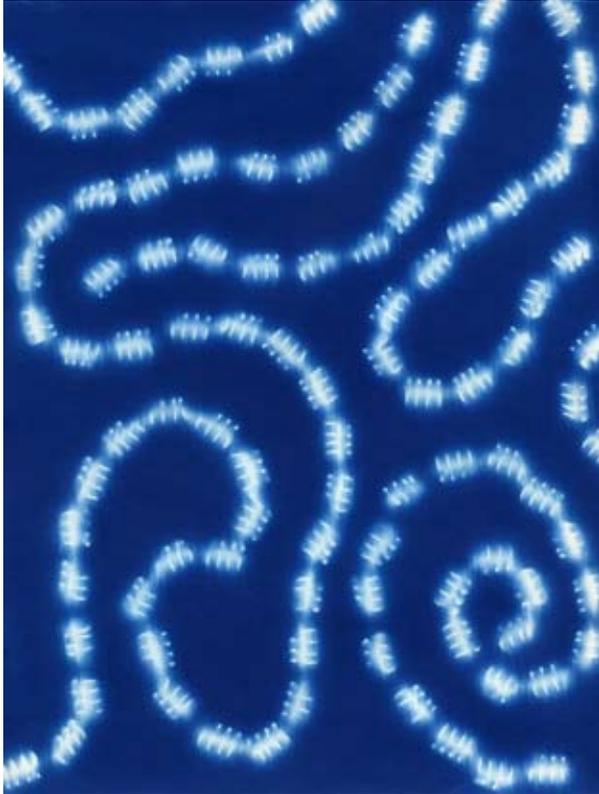
If you want to **learn more about cyanotypes**, how to print and how to tone in other colors, read the book “Blueprint to cyanotypes”. More information about the book and other books published by AlternativePhotography.com can be found on the last page.



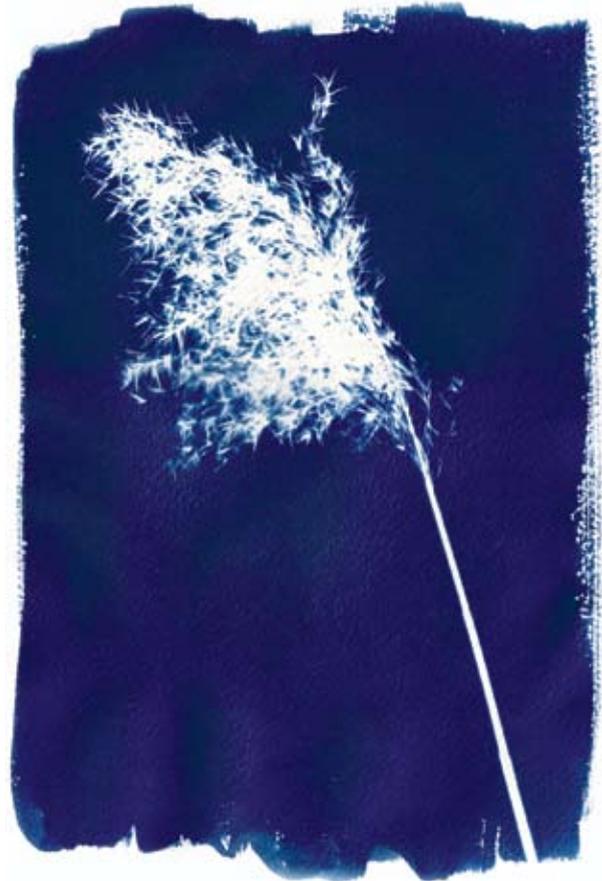
There is even more information about cyanotypes and other alternative photographic techniques on www.AlternativePhotography.com. There are plenty of examples of images and artists working in cyanotypes and how-to-articles.

Good luck!

Example of photograms

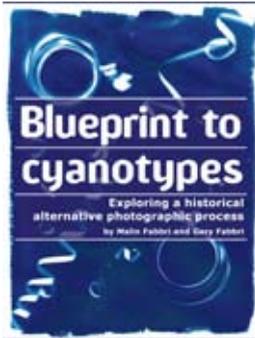


*"Octopedes" by Elizabeth Graves © 2007
Octopedes was made by putting pieces of pasta in a pattern on the cyanotype paper, making it look like insects walking around.*



*"Reed in the Wind" by Malin Fabbri.
This picture is made by putting gras directly onto the cyanotype paper.*

Publications by AlternativePhotography.com



Blueprint to cyanotypes

All you need to get started with cyanotypes. It offers the beginner a step-by-step guide, from choosing material to making the final print. It is full of information and tips. Even the experienced cyanotypist may learn a thing or two.

- Format: Paperback, 68 pages, full color
- ISBN: 978-1-4563-4222-7

More info: www.AlternativePhotography.com/cyanotypes

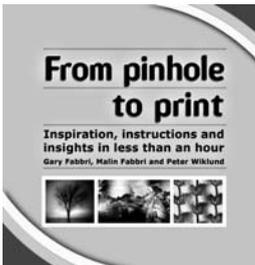


Alternative Photography: Art & Artists, Ed. I

Highlights the work of over 100 of today's most active photographers working with alternative processes. Discover how the different processes create a unique look in a print, and get an insight into how the processes function. The images are great inspiration. And, the purpose of this book? To inspire.

- Format: Paperback and hardback, 238 pages, full color

More info: www.AlternativePhotography.com/ArtAndArtists1

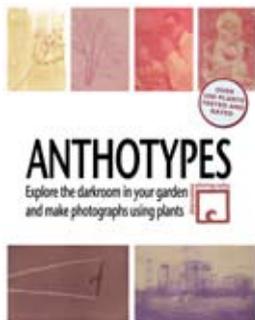


From pinhole to print

Guiding you from drilling your first pinhole to printing your first pinhole photograph. An easy to read, step-by-step guide to making a pinhole camera and creating images. Today – when most cameras are brimming with digital functionality - many seek relief in the simplicity of a basic pinhole camera.

- Format: Paperback, 44 pages, black & white
- ISBN: 978-91-633-4380-3

More info: www.AlternativePhotography.com/pinhole



Anthotypes

Anthotypes will make you look at plants in a whole new light. It will show you how to make photographs from the juice of flowers, fruits and plants, a totally environmentally friendly photographic process.

- Format: Paperback, 100 pages, full color
- ISBN: 978-1466261006

More info: www.AlternativePhotography.com/anthotypes