

CYANOTYPE DRAWINGS

INTRODUCTION

Cyanotype is a photographic process that develops images using sunlight. In this workshop, we will make drawings and turn them into cyanotype sun-prints.

Cyanotype paper is soaked with a special chemical solution that turns the paper from blue to white under UV light. By strategically blocking the UV sunlight, we can create beautiful works of art.



Example of cyanotype drawings,

MATERIALS

- Cyanotype paper
- Clear acetate or clear binder sleeve (same size as the cyanotype paper)
- Cardboard (same size as the cyanotype paper)
- Black and yellow sharpies, black paint pen, and/or black acrylic paint
- 2 binder clips
- Masking tape
- Hydrogen peroxide
- A vessel of water, large enough to easily soak cyanotype paper
- Optional: thin tape and packing tape

VOCABULARY

negative image: an image with inverted color.

inverted color: light areas of an image appear dark, and dark areas appear light.

reference photo: a photo that guides an artist's drawing, painting, or other art piece.

contrast: the light areas of a photo are really light, and the dark areas are really dark, without many tones in between.

develop: to create an image through a film process.

PREPARE YOUR WORKSPACE

- 1 Your work station should be indoors and near a sink. If you purchased a hydrogen peroxide spray bottle, just leave it near your sink. If you purchased a regular bottle of hydrogen peroxide, pour it into a vessel of water with a 1:10 ratio of peroxide to water.
- 2 Fill another vessel (larger than your cyanotype paper) with plain water.

CREATE YOUR DRAWING

- 3 While working on your drawing, leave your cyanotype paper in the sealed packet: it's crucial to keep it out of the sunlight until you're ready to **develop** the image. You'll be drawing on the clear acetate.

The cyanotype process will **invert** your drawing. This means that the areas where you draw with black will become white and the clear parts will become dark blue, kind of like an X-ray. If you want your cyanotype to have normal lights and darks, you can invert your drawing, and when it **develops**, the inversion will be reversed.

If you're using a photo reference, you can invert your photograph using photo editing software and use this to guide your drawing:



original photo



inverted photo



painting on acetate



cyanotype

If you don't mind your cyanotype being inverted, you can skip the **photo negative** process and just draw on your clear acetate or binder sleeve however you'd like.

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Draw on your acetate or binder sleeve using black sharpie, black paint pen, and/or acrylic paint. The thicker this layer is, the more it will block out the sun. Blocking out the sun will make your lines darker, with more **contrast**. You can also use a yellow sharpie to create light lines that can be used for shading.

DEVELOP YOUR CYANOTYPE

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Attach your drawing to your piece of cardboard using two binder clips. The clips should be attached on opposite sides.

6

Take out a piece of cyanotype paper. This should be done inside, because once you take the paper from its sun-proof sleeve, it will start to develop. Quickly slide the paper under your drawing, ensuring that it's held down by the clips.

7

Quickly place this outside in direct sunlight, and let it develop for about 1-3 minutes. When the paper has lightened to almost-white, move your paper to your indoor work station.

8

Rinse your cyanotype by soaking it in a vessel of water for about a minute.

9

If your hydrogen peroxide is in a bottle, spray your cyanotype to cover the whole page. Watch it turn into a beautiful indigo! When it stops getting darker, rinse it off in the sink.

If your hydrogen peroxide is in a container mixed with water, soak your cyanotype until it stops getting darker. Rinse it off in the sink.

10

Place your cyanotype on top of a flat surface to dry. You can place a paper towel underneath the paper to soak up excess water. Make sure to leave it indoors, in a room with low (or zero) sunlight.

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It may take an hour to dry, or even a whole day depending on your climate. It may be a little wrinkly when it dries. To flatten it, you can frame it or place it between the pages of a heavy book.

*Take a photo of your cyanotype drawing and send it to
ffleming@oxy.edu or tag us @oxyarts*