

NATIVE PLANT CYANOTYPES

INTRODUCTION

Using **cyanotypes** and **contour drawings**, we will explore the shapes of local native plants and build our **observational** drawing skills.



Cyanotype by student at Garvanza Elementary

MATERIALS

- Cyanotype paper
- Plants, shells, stones or any other natural materials from the local environment
- Water
- Drawing paper
- Pencils

VOCABULARY

Contour drawing: a drawing technique where you draw the lines that represent the outline of your subject without lifting your pencil from the paper.

Observational drawing: creating a drawing from what you see and trying to depict it as accurately as possible.

Cyanotype: a process of photographic printing that produces a blue and white shapes.

Composition: how the parts of an image are arranged to create a whole. This includes the placement of objects and the relationship of these objects to each other.

STEPS

- 1** In room that is not exposed to sunlight (lamps are fine), arrange your plant materials in a **composition** of your choice on top of your **cyanotype** paper. Some examples of things to consider in your **composition**: how much space do you want to leave around and between the plants? Do you want to feature one central plant as your main subject? Will your plants extend off the edge of your paper or stay within the frame?
- 2** On your drawing paper, draw a **contour drawing** of your plant **composition**. Place your pencil on the paper, and start drawing the outline of the shapes you see. Continue drawing the outline without lifting your pencil.
- 3** Once your **contour drawing** is done, carefully lift your **cyanotype** paper and carry it to a sunny spot. Set it down in the full sun and let it expose for 2 minutes (or whatever the instructions on your paper say).
- 4** After two minutes, bring the paper inside, take off your plant material and dunk the paper into water to stop the exposure. Let the paper dry away from sunlight.
- 5** Compare your **cyanotype** and **contour drawing**. How are they similar? How are they different? Which one captures the shapes, textures and look of the plants more accurately?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What shapes did you notice the most in the native plants that grow in your area?

What emotions do those shapes communicate?

How did the composition you chose impact your final cyanotype print?

Take a photo of your projects and send them
ffleming@oxy.edu or tag us @oxyarts