Cyanotype
Printing on textiles

What is cyanotype?

Cyanotype is a chemical process for producing the cyan-blue pigment **ferric ferricyanide**, also known as Prussian Blue.

This pigment is found in many high-end watercolours, oil and acrylic paints.

In 1842, Sir John Herschel developed the cyanotype process we are using today to produce photographic blueprints.

Setting up the chemistry

there are two components needed to create the sensitiser - **A) Potassium Ferricyanide**, and **B) Ferric Ammonium Citrate.**

Each usually come in powder/crystal form and need to be dissolved in water for about 24 hours before combining. The solutions must be kept in light proof bottles, which usually come with a kit.

When you are ready to use mix equal parts of solution A and B in a light proof container. I used a jam jar covered in black electrical tape.

If you can, do all your preparations in subdued lighting. I did this in my downstairs loo with a red torchlight instead of the normal white bulb.

Have your substrates (paper and/or fabric) ready to go. Using a paintbrush or sponge, coat the substrate with the solution **thinly** and **evenly**. Once coated hang up to dry in the dark - you do not want them to expose in any light.

I had some hanging space in my airing cupboard which I kept shut until they were touch dry.

Keep them stored in a light proof box or envelope until you are ready to print with them. DO NOT EXPOSE TO LIGHT!

Preparing and exposing your print

Today we are picking up the process from here and creating our designs on textile squares.

To prepare fabric for this process it must first be washed to remove any waxy residues from the factory process or storage. Natural fabrics work best and smooth, close weaves create clearer prints.

You have your fabrics pre-painted with the cyanotype solution as per the instructions on the previous page. For the process to work we must have touch **dry** substrates.

Decide on your design using flat objects - pressed flowers, lace, string, or even a drawn image on a piece of acetate (use sharpie pens). Plan this ahead so you can work quickly when you bring out your substrate.

When ready, lay your substrate on a board or surface, place your design objects on top as preferred and then lay a clear piece of glass, perspex or acetate on top to flatten everything and hold it in place. You could use bulldog clips to help secure it all together.

Take this to the exposure box and place it under the box facing upwards. Position the light in the hole at the top of the box and switch on and leave for 10-15mins. DO NOT LOOK AT THE LIGHT. UV light can damage eyes, so please do not look directly at the light source. You can use sunglasses, but the box is designed for keeping the light contained.

Exposure continued...

After the required time in the exposure box, turn off the light and carefully remove your prints.

They will be a dull greyish/blue colour and when you remove your objects, you will see the yellow/green tint behind them.

Quickly submerge your print in a cold water bath and gently move it around and rub the surface lightly to remove excess solution from the print.

If any solution is left it will continue to expose in light and become less clear. You can transfer to a second clean tray to make extra sure you have a clean wash out.

You should see your print exposing to a brillian blue as you do this.

Once clean, blot your print gently on some paper and lay it out to dry.

The work can be ironed once dry and if you washed it thoroughly enough there should be no residue. To be sure you can give it a gentle handwash first with soap and water and hang to dry before ironing.

Now enjoy your prints and decide what you would like to do with them!