

Cyanotype History: The English scientist and astronomer Sir John Herschel discovered this procedure in 1842. Herschel didn't consider the process as photographic but as a means of reproducing notes and diagrams, as in blueprints. It was the female photographer Anna Atkins who brought this process to photography. She created a limited series of cyanotype books that documented ferns and other plant life from her extensive seaweed collection. Atkins placed specimens directly onto coated paper, allowing the action of light to create a silhouette effect.

Cyanotype formula

Solution A: 25 grams of Ferric ammonium citrate (green) added to 100 ml water.

Solution B: 10 grams of Potassium ferricyanide added to 100 ml water.

In a darkened room (no UV light) mix equal parts of solution A and B. The solution is now light sensitive and should be used immediately and stored in complete darkness.

In the same darkened room coat a piece of watercolor paper (90 pound works well) using a small paint brush and dry the paper using a hair dryer. The paper may be stored in a light-tight box for later use.

Using the contact printing method expose the paper to full sun for 15-20 minutes. The yellow emulsion should turn to a steel blue gray color. Exposure times vary greatly depending upon the strength of the UV source and the density of the negative. Artificial light sources rich in UV may be used with testing.

The UV light reduces the iron(III) to iron(II). This is followed by a complex reaction of the iron(II) complex with ferricyanide. The result is an insoluble, blue dye (ferric ferrocyanide) known as Prussian blue.

Develop / rinse in water until stain clears.

3% Hydrogen peroxide for enhanced blues.

Air Dry.

<http://www.digitaltruth.com/store/cart/Raw-Chemicals/>

Approximate chemical cost (\$2.00 for 25-50 8x10's)