Cyanotypes

Celebrating Spring and Summer with Sun Prints!
Inspiration

Anna Atkins (1799–1871), English photographer and botanist. She is considered to be the first female photographer.

Atkins created a series of books featuring her cyanotypes using photograms—a photographic image made without a camera.

This photogram by Atkins is part of the Stanley Museum of Art collection and we’ll use it as inspiration today to make our own cyanotypes.

Anna Atkins (British, 1799–1871)

*Aspidium lobatum, Goudhurry, Kent, 1851–1854*

Cyanotype, 13 3/4 x 9 5/8 in.

Museum purchase, 1987.3
Science

Two chemicals, ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide, are mixed together and applied to paper, which then dries in a dark place. This makes the photo paper we’ll print on today.

Objects are placed on the paper, and a clear acrylic sheet then placed over the objects, and placed in sunlight.

The sunlight hitting the citrate reduces the iron in the mixture and then reacts with the ferricyanide. The result is a Prussian blue color.

After this exposure, the picture is developed by rinsing off the yellow unreacted iron with water. The Prussian blue remains—and the color darkens as it dries.
Supplies

• **Sun Art Paper Kit** (various sizes)—includes paper and acrylic sheet

• Objects to print:
  Items in nature, buttons, lace, paper clips... items that are flat with an interesting outline or shape

• Foil

• Tub of water or faucet
Step 1. Go outside and collect objects or collect objects from around your house. 
On a table indoors or outside (out of the sun and wind)—arrange objects you would like to print.
Step 2. Arrange the objects above the clear acrylic to keep the Sun Art paper underneath clean. Be sure to stay out of direct sunlight. When you’re ready, place the acrylic over the objects.
Step 3. Carefully place the arrangement in direct sunlight for 5 minutes (20 minutes on a cloudy day). When the paper turns white you can take it out of the sun.
Step 4. Fill the tub with water and layout the foil next to it.
Remove the items from the paper.
Step 5. Soak the paper in water for 1-5 minutes OR quickly run under a faucet. The paper will begin to turn blue again. The longer you let the paper soak, the darker the blue you will get.
Step 6. Allow the paper to dry fully on the foil. The paper will continue to darken for several hours.

*Flatten under a large heavy book for 1-2 days if it’s crinkled when dried.*
Step 7. Take a picture and share it with us!

#StanleySunPrints