seeing with cyanotypes

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HK Farm & Urban Beekeeping

Introduced to cyanotypes through a desire to learn about urban farming and beekeeping in Hong Kong. Seasonal plants growing in the garden were used to print.
solution P:
- potassium ferricyanide 10g
- + 100ml distilled water

solution F:
- ferric ammonium citrate 25g
- + 100ml distilled water

- Mix equal parts of solutions P+F when you are ready to use.
- It's best to store the solutions in separate brown bottles.
- Keep chemicals in dry form until you need to make up the solutions.
materials

- sponge brush
- paper assortment/material that will absorb chemical solution (cotton/natural fibers work well) vellum/tracing paper is my favourite to work with—try out different weights
- rigid board (black clipboard, opaque plexiglass, wood/canvas board, old photo frame back, etc.)
- clear plexiglass/glass approximately the same size as board for sandwiching items you want to keep in place (paper cutouts, leaves, things easily blown away or that need good contact with paper surface to capture details)
- binder clips
- masking tape
- latex/plastic gloves
- brown glass bottles for two solutions
- plastic trays/plates for mixing solution
- sunlight/UV lamp
- black paper (for cut-outs/blocking sunlight to stop exposure)
- scissors
- found objects (flatter ones easier to work with, try others for photograms, reflective ones like paperclips have interesting results)
- images on transparencies (print as negatives, reverse if there is text as you want to place printed side up and not touching the sensitized paper)
1. Tape paper to board (especially thin paper that may buckle when wet), heavier paper optional.
2. Add equal spoonfuls of each solution to plastic plate and mix with tip of sponge brush.
3. Evenly apply thin layer of solution to paper with sponge brush. Prepare several in advance especially when using absorbent paper like those for ink painting.
4. Let dry in dim area while you plan composition/choose items. (optional—dry with hairdryer to speed up process if available)
5. Place items on sensitized paper and expose to sunlight. The solution will darken from a golden yellow to deep green navy blue. To stop overexposure on really sunny days, have a black piece of paper to cover as you bring back into room/dim area.
6. Place print in a tray of cold water to develop image. Give it a quick soak to remove most of the solution that was not exposed to sunlight, dump out the water and soak again in clean water. You want to make sure all the yellow chemical solution in light areas is rinsed off. After the initial two soaks, you can take print and put it under running water if the paper is strong enough.
7. Drip dry over sink as much as possible, then hang on drying line with clips if utilizing outdoor space. If using drying rack, put newspaper/scrap paper down first and lay on top to dry to avoid the squares from the drying rack making dents in paper. Tracing paper will dry wrinkly—place under heavy objects after fully dry or dry between stacks of blotting paper.
8. Blue will darken more if you store it in a folder in a dark place for a little while.
elderly workshop in a village in Fanling
Chiang Mai University students
MS GIN students creating backgrounds for posters for a stationery drive project
If working indoors with students, track and document times with direct sunlight in classroom that can be used.

Experiment with exposure time for varying shades of blue and detail of objects printed.

Block out using tracing paper shapes.
Sketchbook made using cyanotypes on tracing paper and working into the images with white ink, thread and ink pen for The Sketchbook Project.
Neighbourhood nature book project
Detail of dragonfly wing—place wing flat against dry sensitized paper, take care not to overexpose or fine lines may be lost.
background info + artists

- **The Cyanotype Process**—Christopher James provides a comprehensive look at this art form and gives advice on non-standard solutions as well as toning of prints.

- A brief overview from wikipedia: Cyanotype

- **Cyanotypes: Photography’s Blue Period**

- **Anna Atkins**
  - Cyanotypes of British Algae by Anna Atkins

- **Man Ray (rayographs)**
  - info at the MET
  - The Modernist Lens—Man Ray and the photogram

- **László Moholy-Nagy**
  - info at MoMA

- **Lauren Redniss**

- **Do Ho Suh**
resources in HK

Wing Hing Chemical Company
www.winghingchemical.com

They carry brown glass bottles, chemicals they stocked previously, not sure about now as their business seems to have shifted a bit.

Your school science department is your best friend for chemicals : ).

The Sun International Supplies Limited
Various locations (Mong Kok, Wan Chai, Fanling)
www.thesun.com.hk

They carry plexiglass in various thicknesses and can cut them to any size you want.