

How to make your own...

Cyanotype

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Cyanotypes are made through a chemical reaction with UV or ultraviolet light! The chemicals in the paper - ammonium iron (iii) citrate and potassium ferricyanide - react with UV light to create an insoluble blue dye! Then you develop the film in water and a little vinegar, and your print is finished!

MATERIALS:

- [Sunprint paper](#)
- Supplies to make your image. Now this could be all kinds of materials - I cut designs out of paper, and used some mesh, but you can use leaves, shells, Legos, anything you think has a cool outline!
- Plexiglass sheet
- Plastic bin
- Vinegar (or lemon juice!)
- Water

BEFORE YOU START:

To begin, make sure that you are in a room where sunlight can't reach you! You don't want any UV light to touch your print before you're ready. Luckily, indoor lights aren't powerful enough to produce ultraviolet light, so you don't need to work in a darkroom, like you would for ordinary film.

STEP 1:

Assemble the photogram out of the materials you gathered. I decided to cut out a rough image of Saturn! Cover your assembled photogram with a sheet of plexiglass to make sure that nothing moves around during the exposure. Don't use a piece of glass! Some types of glass are opaque to UV light, so your film wouldn't react!



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STEP 2:

Take your print outside! Make sure it isn't in a shadow while you leave it to expose.

STEP 3:

Wait for your film to react to the light! On a sunny day, it should take about five minutes. On a cloudy day, it might take as long as twenty.

STEP 4

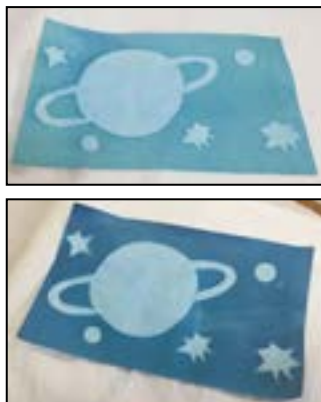
Once your film is exposed, bring it inside and take the materials off. The exposed parts of the film look almost bleached with sunlight, and the areas that were hidden from the sun look dark!

STEP 5

But what happens when we develop the film? Put the film into a shallow bath of water and vinegar (a good splash will do - it doesn't have to be very much!), and shake it around.

STEP 6

What do you see? The colors reversed!



STEP 7

Crazy, right? Why does that happen? Well, the parts of the film that were exposed to the sunlight reacted with UV light to create insoluble dye - a dye that can't dissolve or wash away! The chemicals on the rest of the film didn't get a chance to react and they wash away in the water. As the print dries, the true color of the blue dye comes through! By the next day, your cyanotype should be a beautiful, deep blue!

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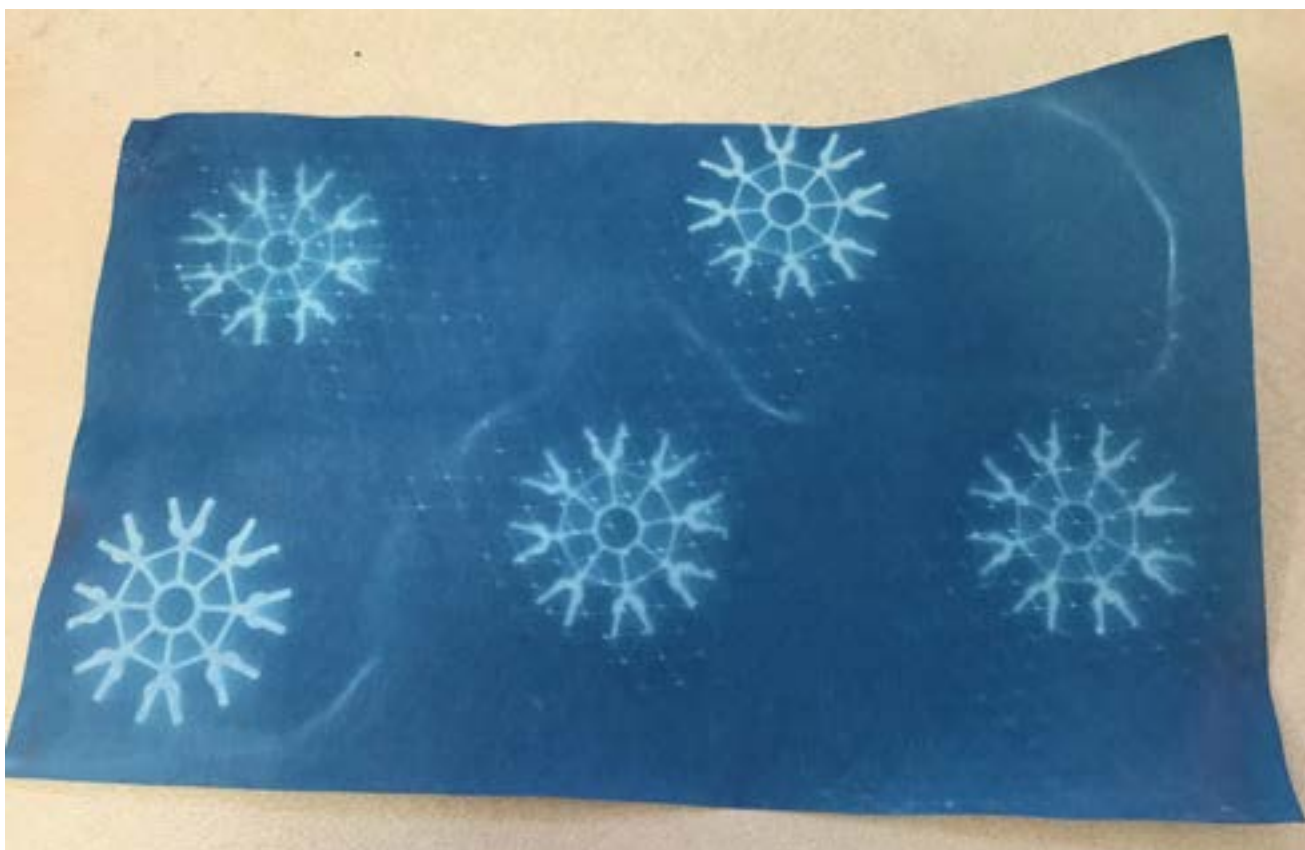
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TIME LAPSE:

Check out this video to see the process in action!



CHALLENGE:

What kind of images can you capture with your cyanotypes?