

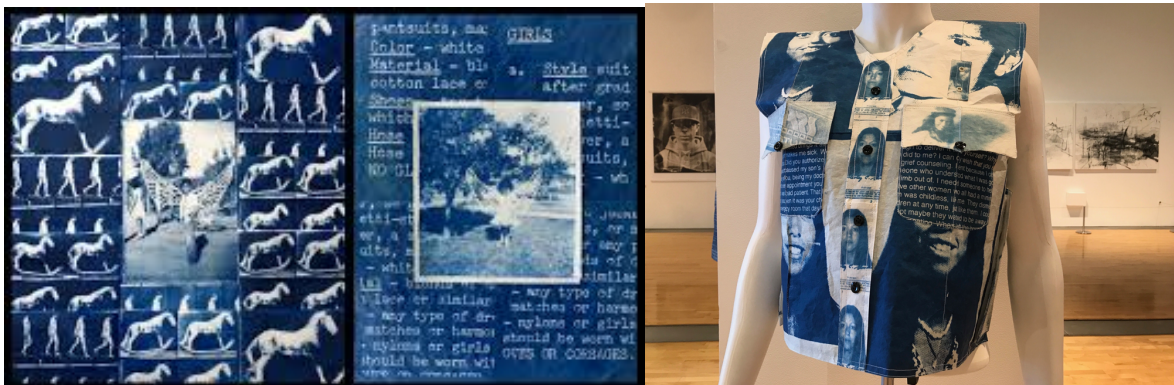
How I Became an Artista // Community Art LAB

Cyanotype Prints with Annie Lopez

ARTIST INTRO:

Annie Lopez is a fourth generation Phoenician. Her work has been exhibited in the United States, but López's subject remains predominantly tied to her experience in the Southwest. Her art reflects her experiences using family photographs, old "found" photos, personal letters, and short stories. In her work she presents a dialogue about racism, stereotypes, the local art world, personal relationships and family. López is primarily a photographer, but chooses to apply unique techniques when developing and displaying her images, such as creating paper dresses from blueprint prints. She has exhibited her work in numerous venues across the country, including the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, the Santa Fe Museum of Fine Arts, the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, and the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts. She was the first artist from Arizona selected to represent the state in the "Paper Routes-Women to Watch 2020" exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Her work is in the collections of the Phoenix Art Museum; the Weatherspoon Museum of Art in Greensboro, North Carolina; the Arizona State University Museum; the Tucson Museum of Art; the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and the cities of Phoenix and Glendale, Arizona.

ARTWORK:



WORKSHOP STEPS

MIXING CHEMICALS

To make your print you need two chemicals: Ferric Ammonium Citrate and Potassium Ferricyanide. (These chemicals are available where you buy photographic chemicals.)

Here is Annie's recipe:

Measure 2 tablespoons of ferric ammonium citrate and mix into a ½cup of distilled water and stir. Separately measure 1 tablespoon of Potassium Ferricyanide and mix into a ½ cup of distilled water. (Make sure to mark your bottles as A and B. These separately mixed chemicals last 4-6 months). To prepare the light sensitive solution, mix equal parts of your A and B chemicals. Use dedicated measuring cups and spoons for your chemicals and keep them in your studio or workroom. Annie measures out the chemicals in separate measuring glasses, then combines them in a small paint tray. She sometimes uses the plastic container that lunch meat comes as her paint tray.

APPLYING THE CHEMICALS

Cyanotype works best on a natural surface that can withstand being soaked in water. So, if you're using fabric, choose silk or cotton. The obvious choice for paper is watercolor paper. To apply the solution, use a foam brush. You are covering your surface in even layers. Don't let the liquid pool on the surface because it will create a pattern that will interfere with your image (Painting on solution). How you paint on the chemical solution affects your final product. If you like brush marks, go with it. If you want a clean look, you can mark off the edges with drafting tape which can be removed once the surface is dry. Allow your cloth or paper to dry in a dark room with no sunlight leaking in. The solution is yellow and will change color later when exposed to the sun.

CHOOSING WHAT TO PRINT

Anything you put on the surface of your dried solution will block out the light and appear white in the finished print. Anything exposed to the sun will appear blue. While your surface is drying, lay out objects in advance so you know how you want your print to look. (You can choose leaves, flowers, or objects with interesting shapes. If you choose a 3-dimensional object, consider how the sun will hit it and create a shadow unless it is directly above it.)

PREPARING TO PRINT

To print, you will need a backing board, like you would find in a picture frame, or a strong piece of cardboard. Whatever you choose needs to be larger than your surface. You will also need a piece of glass or clear acrylic to match the size of your board. If you are using glass, it would be heavy enough to hold down your flat objects. If you are using acrylic, you can use clips to hold it close to the backing board and give the image a sharper line.

EXPOSING THE PRINT

Carry your board with the prepared paper and objects on it outdoors to a sunny area and let the sun hit it until the surface turns gray (Setting the board out in the sun). Watch out for the movement of the sun and how it makes shadows. It takes around 20–25 minutes. Set a timer. You will see the exposed solution turn from yellow to green to gray. When the time has passed, carefully pick up your board with the objects on it (picking up and carrying board). Do not let the items shift around. Carry it indoors or to a shady spot and remove the items from your board.

WASHING YOUR PRINT

Take your paper, or cloth, if that is what you are printing on, and place it under running water to remove all the unexposed chemicals. Rinse and rinse until there are no more yellow running off your print (Rinsing print). Then soak it in clean water until you are certain all the unexposed chemicals are gone (Soaking). Give it about 10 minutes. Remove your paper from the water and allow it to dry in a room without direct sunlight (Lay wet print on newspaper to dry). Once it is dry, the blue color becomes more intense (Show dry print). THAT'S IT

MATERIALS

Before you start, get all the items you need together.

- 28 grams of Ferric ammonium citrate (green)
- 14 grams of Potassium ferricyanide
- Water (distilled if possible)
- Two bottles with caps
- Scale or measuring spoons
- Measuring jug
- 2 glass containers for mixing ingredients
- Watercolor paper or water absorbent surface
- Rubber gloves
- Apron or old shirt
- Freezer paper or newspaper to cover work surface
- Cleaning cloth
- Brushes or coating rod
- Clamps or paper binders
- Glass or a contact print frame or a clear acrylic sheet
- Sunshine or a UV light source

OBJECTIVES

Participants will explore and learn the photographic process of Cyanotype printing.

Participants will identify and learn to use the materials used for this method of printing.

Participants will use principles of design to create unique compositions using personal items.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is the story you want to tell?

How did you go about choosing your personal objects to print?

Did you try different compositional arrangements before producing the final work?

Did your work turn out how you intended?

What did you enjoy the most about this process?

Key Terms to consider: storytelling, family history, cyanotype, negatives, positives

ADDITIONAL READING

Children's Books:

The Day you Begin - Jacqueline Woodson

Larry Schaaf (1982) *Anna Atkin's Cyanotypes: An experiment in photographic publishing, History of Photography*, 6:2, 151-172, DOI: 10.1080/03087298.1982.10442730

Halloran, Lia. "From Your Body Is a Space That Sees, 2016." *Diacritics*, vol. 44 no. 1, 2016, p. 100-103. *Project MUSE*, [doi:10.1353/dia.2016.0004](https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.2016.0004).

Fabbri, Malin, and Gary Fabbri. *Blueprint to Cyanotypes: Exploring a Historical Alternative Photographic Process*. Malin Fabbri, 2006.