



Creative Alternative Printing (Cyanotype)

Overview:

Historical processes, commonly known as “alternative printing”, were the first traditional photographic processes. Largely forgotten, many of these unique and fascinating 19th century processes are re-emerging as artists seek alternatives to the artificial and somewhat plastic digital world we have created.

Alternative prints are handcrafted by coating light sensitive chemicals with a brush onto fine cotton paper. The coated paper is exposed in the sun and then rinsed in water to create an antiquated feel.

Depending on the process a wide array of colour tones can be achieved.

Though the workshops are designed so that all participants will leave with a good working knowledge of the process and a foundation that will allow you to continue the processes at home, the workshops are therefore not technically orientated.

Course outline:

The Cyanotype process was discovered in 1842 by Sir John Herschel. In his quest to find alternative light sensitive substances other than silver halides, Herschel discovered that if he combined two iron salts (potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate) it would create a light-sensitive solution when dissolved in water.

A sheet of paper was coated with the light sensitive solution, and when exposed to sunlight, a complex reaction took place. The paper was then washed in water, upon which an image was created in delicate tones of Prussian blue. The process quickly became very popular - it was cheap, simple, and safe. Moreover, the process resulted in stable, permanent prints. Herschel named the process Cyanotype from the Greek words believed to mean “blue” and “imprint”. Interestingly, he also coined the name “photography”. Fine examples of 19th century prints still survive in museums around the world, including originals made by Herschel in the 1842.

Who should attend:

Cyanotype is historical in value, educational and regarded as a fine art medium. Not only for photographers, beginner to professional, but also teachers, educators, illustrators, graphic designers and artists are welcome.

Level: Beginner

Admission requirements: Basic knowledge of photography is useful, but not essential.

Materials :

Two images have to be handed in no later than 3 weeks prior to the workshop, and can be delivered on CD (large at least 300dpi A4 size) or sent by email to janus@silvertone.co.za.

What type of image? The number one question everyone always ask. As the Cyanotype produces a print with Prussian blue tones, the process does not suit all subject matters. This, of course, is entirely a question of personal taste. Seascapes, some portraits, abstracts and architecture work well.

Fees include all materials required, including A4 litho negative, Japanese hake brush, fine artist’s water colour paper, light-sensitive chemistry, printing frame, and all necessary safety gear. Please note - these processes are NOT hazardous if performed correctly.

Duration: 1 session (4 hours)

Lecturers: Suzette du Plooy

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