

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF ME

Fading in light

Firstly, like most textiles, if a cyanotype is left in strong light it may fade. However, unlike most faded textiles, this is largely reversible. When Prussian blue is exposed to light it can be reduced to Prussian white, which is a colourless substance, causing the image to fade.

To reverse this process leave the cyanotype in a dark place, in the presence of air, until it has regained its original colour. This method encourages the oxidation of the Prussian white back to Prussian blue. Now, don't you wish you could do that to other fabrics!

Fading from alkaline conditions (and how to wash)

The second way to lose the blue of your image is to apply something alkaline. This means you have to be careful with what you wash your cyanotypes with.

Only wash the product when really needed. For washing, use a small quantity of a mild liquid cleaner which is free of phosphates or bleaching agents like washing soda, chlorine or borax because they will cause the colour to fade or disappear. Try a mild detergent labelled for use on protein fibres like silk or wool, bio/natural detergents, or something like baby shampoo. Always check the label of the product first. Whatever product you pick, use the minimum amount possible.

Also be aware that:

- things like deodorant can be alkaline.
- if you leave a cyanotype in very hard water overnight, that can be enough to fade it.

Unfortunately, once your cyanotype has lost colour through an alkaline process the original colour can't be reinstated.

Fading from friction

Cyanotypes sit largely on the surface of the fabric so, over a period of time, as the fabric is used and washed, then some of the cyanotype is rubbed off. So, as with indigo dyed fabrics, you should avoid surface friction.

Good practice would be to:

- hand wash gently rather than machine wash
- iron on the reverse of the fabric on a low to medium setting (you may notice that the colour fades a little as you iron it - don't panic, the colour comes back as it cools)
- avoid wringing the fabric too hard when you are rinsing

Framing your cyanotypes

Remember that cyanotypes are sensitive to alkaline conditions so you may not want to use acid free board or paper to mount them or wrap them in as both of these are designed to create an alkaline environment and may damage your print in the long run.

Also some preparations to clean glass during the framing process can contain ammonia and should be avoided as the residual alkaline environment could damage your print.