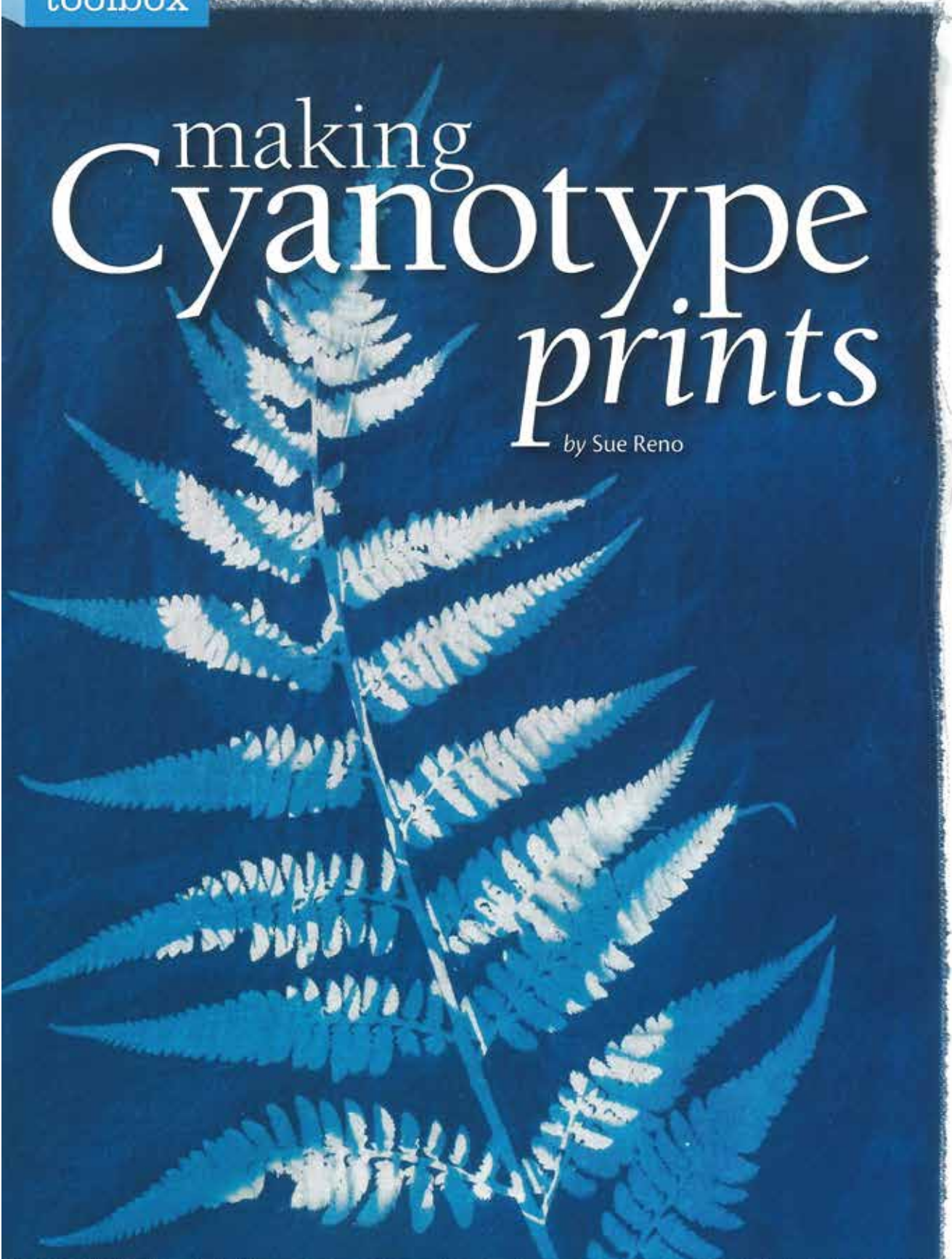


out of the
toolbox

making Cyanotype *prints*

by Sue Reno



Cyanotype is one of my favorite processes for putting imagery on fabric. I've been working with it for years so I was excited to try some new cyanotype products from Jacquard® to see how they might transform my process.

For this test I worked with four products:

- Jacquard Pretreated Fabric Sheets, 8½" x 11", in cotton sateen.
- Jacquard Cyanotype Set, which I used to treat my own cotton sateen. The set includes a bottle each of potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate which will treat approximately 50 pieces of fabric 8½" x 11".
- Product A, pretreated cotton sateen from my usual supplier.
- Product B, pretreated cotton muslin from another online supplier.

I was especially curious to try the Cyanotype Set. The directions were very clear and the process was easy. I filled both bottles of chemicals with water and waited 24 hours for the powders to dissolve. I cut and prepped pieces of PFD (prepared for dyeing) cotton sateen by pinning them onto a plastic-covered foam board. Working in dim lighting, I mixed equal amounts of both solutions in small batches, and painted it onto the fabric.

I tried a foam brush and a paintbrush. Both worked well, but the paintbrush seemed to stretch the solution a little further. At this stage, the treated fabric is a greenish color. I placed the foam board on a drip guard in a dark closet and let the fabric dry overnight. From there I proceeded with my test. Again working in dim lighting, I placed one sheet of each of the four products' treated sheets on a foam board so I could expose

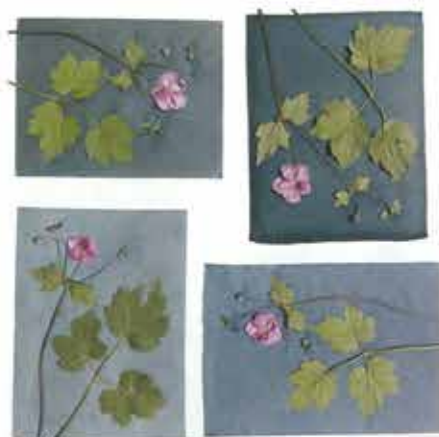


figure 1



figure 2

them simultaneously. I cut some Japanese anemone leaves from my garden, and pinned them into place with small sequin pins. (figure 1) I placed the foam board in bright mid-day sunshine, and did a timed exposure of ten minutes. The anemone sprigs served as a mask, shielding the fabric from the ultraviolet rays that develop the print.

I brought the board back into my dimly lit studio, removed the pins and plants, and rinsed out the prints using warm water and following the manufacturer's instructions. I used several changes of water to ensure that all the excess cyanotype solution was removed. In the last rinse, I added a squirt of hydrogen peroxide—this step is optional but oxidizes the print to a darker blue. (figure 2)

Process photos by Sue Reno



The Cyanotype Set created the most vibrant print from a photo transparency.



figure 3



figure 4

I was very pleased with the results. The prints made from the fabric I treated with the Jacquard products were some of the most intense and vibrant cyanotype images I have ever produced. Pre-treated, purchased cyanotype fabric, when kept in a light-proof bag, is usable for months, but the intensity does fade slightly with time. I suspect that it was the freshness of the treatment I applied that made these prints so wonderful. The Jacquard pretreated sheets also performed very well, on a par with Product A, which reliably gives me crisp, high-quality prints. Product B gave acceptable prints, but with less depth of color.

I tried the test again using photo transparencies as the resist. Again, I had good results from all four products, with the fabric I treated with the Jacquard products producing the most vibrant results. (See the sidebar “Working with transparencies.”)

Another advantage of treating my own fabric is the opportunity to work with types of fabric not readily available in a pretreated format. I tried the Jacquard solutions on some PFD silk noil. As it dried, the solution wicked away from the little nubs in the fabric. (figure 3) I could have gone back and given it another coat of solution, but I really liked the slightly speckled effect it gave when printed. I have plans to try the solution on colored fabrics, and I’ve done some preliminary experiments with double exposures. (figure 4)

I liked the prints so much, I was inspired to make an art quilt, “Japanese Anemone,” using them!

Cyanotype remains one of my favorite processes, and the new products from Jacquard are a good addition to my toolbox. Several companies offer excellent quality, pre-treated fabric sheets, but the Jacquard Cyanotype Set will be especially appealing to quilt artists who wish to treat their own fabrics.

Make cyanotype prints

1. If using the Jacquard set, mix the solution according to the package instructions. Paint it onto fabric and let the fabric dry in a dark place.
2. Working in dim lighting, pin the treated fabric to a foam board or similar portable surface.
3. Mask the surface to form a design. Possibilities include leaves and flowers, foam shapes, stencils, stick-on letters, or printed transparency sheets.
4. Hold the masking materials in place with small pins, or cover with a sheet of glass or plexiglass.
5. Place the board in sunlight. Tilt the board if necessary to match the angle of the sun. A ten-minute exposure is standard—decrease the time slightly for bright mid-day summer sun, or increase it for less than optimal conditions. The fabric will turn grayish as it exposes.
6. Make small samples and keep notes before starting a large project. Images that are somewhat over- or under-exposed are still very usable.
7. Bring the boards back inside and remove the masks and pins. Wearing rubber gloves, rinse the fabric in several changes of warm water, adding hydrogen peroxide in the last rinse (suggested as an optional step, but I recommend it). Watch the magic happen as the print develops!
8. Lay the fabric flat and allow it to dry completely.

Cyanotype prints are very stable over time. If you will be using them in a project that will be washed, be sure to use a non-phosphate detergent. ✿



figure 5



figure 6



figure 7

working with transparencies

Digital photos can be used to make cyanotypes by first printing them onto acetate transparency sheets and using these like photo negatives to mask the fabric. If you have a computer photo program you prefer, use it to prepare the images. If you are new to the process, or just want to experiment, try using Jacquard's Negative Generator (jacquardcyanotype.com).

The Negative Generator is basically a stripped down photo editor that lets you make all the common changes that will produce a good negative. I usually crop my photo, increase the saturation and contrast, change it to grayscale, and change it from positive to negative. (figures 5, 6, & 7)

If your inkjet printer has a setting for transparencies, use it. Otherwise, you may have to experiment, and tape the transparency sheet to a piece of paper to enable it to feed properly through the printer. Print on the textured side of the transparency. Let it air dry thoroughly before use.

order yours *today*



Try your hand at cyanotype printing with the Jacquard Cyanotype Kit, available at interweavestore.com/jacquard-cyanotype-kit.