

*Making Digital Negatives and*  
**CYANOTYPES**  
*with Cotton Miller*

**Dear Participants,**

I am SO excited to welcome you to my online workshop Creating Digital Negatives and Cyanotypes! Together, we'll dive into a process that celebrates the origins of photography, blending the digital precision of modern tools with the tactile, hands-on artistry of one of the oldest photographic techniques.

Our workshop not only honors this rich history but also bridges it with contemporary technology through the creation of digital negatives. These negatives allow us to use digital images as the foundation for handmade prints, offering endless creative possibilities. This unique approach is a celebration of the Handmade in the Digital Age, combining innovation with tradition allowing you to take a unique approach to modern photography.

This workshop is designed to guide you step-by-step through the process of creating digital negatives and cyanotype prints. As an active participant, you will:

- Learn how to transform your digital images into negatives using Adobe Photoshop.
- Understand the chemistry and techniques of cyanotype printing
- Create and refine your own cyanotype prints

The final session will culminate in a class review of your prints. Renowned expert and a personal mentor of mine, **Dan Burkholder, a pioneer in printing digital negatives**, will join me in reviewing your work. Together, we will honor your dedication and creativity by reviewing your prints that showcase technical mastery and artistic vision, and discuss ways to make your prints even better..

### **Celebrate the Origins and Future of Photography**

This workshop is more than just a technical lesson—it's a celebration of the timeless appeal of photography. From Sir John Herschel's invention of the cyanotype to the integration of digital tools today, we're carrying forward a tradition of experimentation and artistry.

In the words of another artist, friend, and Mentor, **Christopher James** as written in the Introduction to his book [\*\*The Book of Alternative Processes: 3rd Edition\*\*](#):

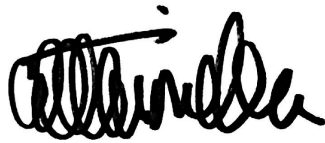
*To me, photography is unquestionably evolving into a medium that will soon require a new definition. From an alternative process perspective, one that I believe is the spear tip in this new adventure, the flexibility of these processes present a perfect marriage partner to almost all of the arts that are willing to see what will happen if they take the proverbial plunge. To the upcoming generations of photographic artists, schooled with the pixelated imagery and battery-dependent tools of digital imaging, using one's hands to make an image is a persuasive argument simply because it is almost always imperfect... and as a result, a profound and precise reflection of us all.*

**~ Christopher James**

By the end of this workshop, you'll have not only the technical skills to create digital negatives and cyanotypes, but also the inspiration to push the boundaries of what's possible in alternative process photography, and therefore Photography as a whole. I can't wait to see the unique visions you'll bring to life.

To get familiar with your experience, if you don't mind filling out this form on my website [here](#). This will allow me to cater towards your needs for the class.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cotton Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Cotton Miller**

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## **WORKSHOP OUTLINE:**

### **Session 1: Introduction to Cyanotypes and Digital Negatives**

- Overview of cyanotype process
- Basics of cyanotype chemistry and tools required.
- Step-by-step process for creating digital negatives using Photoshop.
- Demonstration of coating, exposing, and developing cyanotype prints.

### **Session 2: Refining Your Digital Negatives and Troubleshooting**

- Learn how to adjust tonal ranges, contrast, and density for optimal negatives.
- Finding your minimum print time.
- Printing test strips, and step wedges

### **Session 3: Cyanotype Printing Techniques**

- Tips for troubleshooting issues with your negatives and making adjustments for better results.
- Photograms, and other cameraless techniques
- Inspiration from notable cyanotype artists to expand your creative ideas.

### **Session 4: Final Print Presentation and Future Exploration**

- Exploration of processes that pair well with cyanotypes, such as gum bichromate or mixed media techniques.
- Discussion of advanced cyanotype methods and inspiration for your next steps in alternative photography.
- Class critique and print review, with winners announced by Dan Burkholder.

## **How to Prepare for the Workshop**

### **Organize Your Files:**

- Select 3–5 digital images you'd like to use during the workshop. High-contrast images work especially well for cyanotypes.
- Before the workshop begins, I will send out another email with some adjustment curves for Cyanotypes, and other assets that will be helpful.

## Have the Right Tools Ready:

- A working inkjet photo printer (should have 8-10+ inks) and Pictorico OHP film (or similar transparency film).
- Adobe Photoshop
- Cutting Matt
- Scissors or Exacto Knife
- Binder, and Binder sleeves for storing digital negatives

## Workspace

- Dark or Dim room. You do not need a safe light, and you can work under low wattage incandescent bulbs. If there are windows you will need to mostly cover them.
- Table with enough room for coating paper, and loading paper into contact printing frame.
- Dark drawer, or closet where you can place paper to dry. Keep your coated paper in a dark place until you are ready to expose it.
- Paper towels and old towels are good for cleanup, spills, etc. (dedicate the old towels)
- Sink with running water
- Pitcher (dedicated for chemistry) for moving water from faucet to trays, and can also be used to empty dirty trays into for pouring into sink
- Distilled Water - for keeping brushes in before using to coat paper.

## Materials:

### A note about Cyanotype Chemistry:

Part A of the Cyanotype chemistry Ferric Ammonium Citrate (FAC) has become unavailable, so you are now seeing Mike Ware's formula being sold. This is a modern variation on the process which does not require FAC. It is now available through Bostick & Sullivan as a single premixed formula, instead of two-part formula Part A, and Part B. I will go over the differences in process and chemistry during the workshop.

- [Bostick & Sullivan Mike Ware's Formula](#)
- [Mountain Intaglio](#)- Mike Ware's Formula
- Brushes or foam applicators for applying the cyanotype solution.
  - Budget Brush 1: [Langnickel Brush - 2 in or 3 in](#)
  - Expensive Brush 2: [Richeson Brush - 2 in](#)

- You can also use a [coating rod](#), foam brushes, hake brushes, or other experimental applicators
- Inkjet Transparency Film for printing digital negatives
  - [Pictorico OHP Transparency Film](#)
  - [Inkpress Inkjet Transparency Film](#)
  - [Fixxons](#)
- High-quality paper suitable for cyanotype printing. Paper should be 100% cotton rag paper, muslin, or silk. Arches Platine, Revere Platinum, Hahnemuhle Platinum Rag, Lana-aquarelle, and Rives BFK are very suitable choices for this process. I also like Arches Watercolor Hot Press.
  - [Bostick & Sullivan](#)
  - [Jerry's Artarama](#)
  - [Blick](#)
  - Almost any local Art store will have some options. Even some craft stores will have limited options. Ask for Printmaking papers.
- UV light source or access to direct sunlight.
  - The Sun - Free
  - Budget option - [Everbeam](#) (longer exposure times)
  - Best option - [Edwards Engineering](#) or [Bostick & Sullivan](#)
- Contact Print Frame
  - Best - [Bostick & Sullivan](#)
  - Good - [B&H](#)
  - Minimal cost - DIY (Glass or Plexi, backing material like masonite, large binding clips or heavy clamps)
- Darkroom Trays for rinsing prints (they don't technically have to be darkroom trays, check local hardware stores). Get options that are big enough to wash paper:
  - [Bostick & Sullivan](#)
  - [B&H](#)
  - [Freestyle](#)
- Gloves (nitrile or latex). Choose whatever size works for you,
  - Amazon
  - Walgreens or CVS
- an apron for safety
- [Plastic clothespins](#) - for hang drying prints
- [Hangers for Drying Prints](#) - You can also use regular clothesline rope or cable.
- A sheet of Plexi (11x14 or similar) for removing print from wash, and to drain partially

before hanging to dry.

- [Stouffer Step Wedges](#) - optional

#### **Finishing Prints:**

- [Dorland's Art Wax](#)
- [Renaissance Art Wax](#)

#### **Recommended Books/Resources:**

[The Book of Alternative Processes by Christopher James](#)

[Inkjet Negative Companion by Dan Burkholder](#)

[Cyanotype: The Blueprint in Contemporary Practice by Christina Z. Anderson](#)

[Digital Negatives with QuadToneRIP: Demystifying QTR for Photographers and Printmakers](#) by Ron Reeder and Christina Z. Anderson

[Precision Digital Negatives \(PDN\)](#) - Mark Nelson

[Digital Negatives: Using Photoshop to Create Digital Negatives for Silver and Alternative Process Printing 1st Edition](#) by Brad Hinkel and Ron Reeder

[Bostick & Sullivan Digital Negative Resources](#)

[AlternativePhotography.com](#)