

Anthotype Photography

Workshop Developed by Artist Genevieve Rudd

Objective:

In this workshop you will learn how to create an image using photosensitive material from plants, left-over fruit & veg and tea. A process which was originally invented by Sir John Herschel, an experimental photographer in 1842. By blitzing up colourful plants and straining the liquid you will learn how to apply it as a photography emulsion to coat onto paper. You can then press leaves and flowers onto the coated paper, and expose to the sun, to create an anthotype photography image.

Anthotype is the most environmentally friendly technique out there for producing photographic images.

Note this process is something that could take a day, or even a week from start to finish. It will require you to set something up, then come back in a few hours or the next day, to go onto the next stage.

You will need:

- Plants, weeds, left over fruit & vegetables. For example: beetroot, spinach, dandelion flowers, berries, spices.... things that you might find in your kitchen or garden or when out for a walk.
- Tea
- Glass picture frame
- Thick cartridge or watercolour paper works best, however if you don't have access to this you can use any paper.
- Paintbrush

Top Tip:

It's important to note that Anthotypes will eventually fade, especially when exposed to UV/sunlight, so keep your prints in sketchbooks or away from bright direct light so they keep preserved a little longer.

Activity:

Step 1: Choosing and processing plants

Cut up your veg/fruit/flowers into small pieces. Use a pestle & mortar, blender or mash it, until it becomes a thick pulp. You may need to add a spoon or two of liquid to loosen it (e.g. water, vinegar, alcohol).

Step 2: Strain

Once you have your pulp, it'll need to be strained to get rid of all the solid bits and leave the liquid. You can use a strainer or a square of cotton fabric to strain it through.



Step 3: Coating

Coat the paper using a brush (or dip into the liquid) in subdued lighting – a darkened room; it doesn't have to be as dark as a traditional photography Dark Room.

Use thick watercolour paper if you can. The print will be outside for a day or a week, so the paper will need to be sturdy enough.

Leave the paper to dry in the dark or speed up the process with a hair dryer.



Step 4: Exposure

Make an arrangement of flat objects on the Anthotype coated paper. Pressed flowers usually work well with this technique, to do this make a simple flower press using cardboard, elastic bands and a weight (e.g. books) before you want to make your print.



Once you have chosen your flat objects, slip it all together in a picture frame. Lay this in the sun outside, or on a very sunny window for at least 1 day, but ideally several days or a week. The longer it's outside the stronger the contrast of the print.

Remember the top tip, it is not UV protected so keep it out of direct light!

Examples of Anthotype:



Research

National Trust Artist in Residence Nettie Edwards produces beautiful organic anthotype photographs using plants from Lacock Botanic Garden, working with Lacock head gardener, Sue Carter to grow specific plants for her work.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Conclusion and What Next?

Taking inspiration from artist Nettie Edwards, you could explore your surroundings either by going on a walk or searching for organic materials in your garden. If you have enjoyed learning about Anthotype, you may want to develop your knowledge area and research natural dyeing.

Think about where you might use this process, could you develop this technique into your photography, art or even illustration practice. Could you experiment using other organic materials, applying themes you might already be working with for example colour and texture.



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