

Only currently enrolled students may gain access to the photography laboratory. Individual students are responsible for meeting with the lab assistant or faculty member to review the proper use of equipment to prevent damage. The photography laboratories are designed as group work areas. Students are expected to communicate and to cooperate with their peers, lab assistants, and faculty. Students are encouraged to note general problems with exposure lamps, power outlets, chemical waste, or other equipment, so that solutions can be found in a timely manner. There is a form posted just inside the Film Development Room (ATC 2.905) to report any issues or concerns, which can be done anonymously.

Questions regarding equipment use should be referred to the instructor or Assistant Director (972-883-7508). Emergency messages can be forwarded through the Art and Technology office, (972-883-4376), or Campus Police (972-883-2222), including those related to heating and air conditioning. To report a large chemical spill, contact the UTD Safety Specialist (972-883-4307).

Darkroom Ventilation

Ventilation systems in the Film Development and Print Development areas are activated automatically. Report any concerns about overwhelming chemical smells or lightheadedness to the Safety Specialist or Assistant Director immediately.

Chemicals

Dress appropriately for darkroom work as outlined in the Darkroom Safety Contract. Wear glasses instead of contact lenses to avoid eye irritation, in addition to UV safety goggles. Comfortable shoes which cover your entire foot and long pants are required under your UTD-supplied Lab Coat. No food or drink allowed in the darkroom areas, including chewing gum.

Use only the chemicals and processes set up for your class. If you have ANY questions regarding chemical use, ask your instructor. Prevent skin contact with chemistry. Tongs are available for handling papers during printing and disposable Nitrile gloves are required at all times while working. In case of accidental contact with chemistry, eyewashes are located at the sinks in both the Print Development and Film Development Rooms.

Lights On

Whereas most film emulsions must be used in complete darkness and black and white photographic paper can be used under a yellow or red safelight, cyanotypes or Sun Prints can be executed under normal lighting conditions. When working in the Print Development Room, the main white lights should be left on.

Set Up for Sun Printing

UTD uses a pre-coated cyanotype paper. This eliminates the need for students to coat their own paper, which requires an additional ventilation hood and creates cross-contamination concerns with darkroom chemicals used in other classes. Students should not attempt to coat their own paper with cyanotype chemistry brought from home. The exposure lamps for Sun

Printing requires that students wear UV safety goggles, which UTD provides. These must be worn any time an exposure lamp is in use.

Exposure

Students may set up their paper for exposure using the copy stand in 2.902 (Photography Breakout Studio). After exposure, the paper can be placed in a paper safe and taken to the water wash, which can be set up in the darkroom (2.904) by filling a single tray with water and leaving it in the sink. Only use trays labeled for Cyanotypes to prevent contamination.

For 8x10" or 8.5x11" paper, use one exposure lamp held approximately 10 inches from the paper for a 10 minute exposure or two exposure lamps at the same distance for 7-8 minutes. When using one lamp, move the light around your paper for more even exposure. Use two lamps when possible to prevent underexposure in the corners of your paper. For a 5x7" sheet or smaller, use one lamp at 4 or 5 inches for 4 or 5 minutes. Note these exposure settings are approximate and results will also depend on the transparency of the material being used to create your print, so making a test strip is wise. Your instructor will explain this process further.

After exposure, move the print to the water wash and gently agitate the tray for several minutes until development is complete.

Print Drying

Use care when placing prints, face up, on the screens in the Film Development Room (2.905). Return to pick up your work when it dries—usually within 24 hours. Your care in handling prints will prevent you from accidentally damaging your work and the work of other students.

Clean-up

Be sure to schedule time for cleaning up. Rinse water can be discarded in the DEAD FIX/CYANOTYPE waste container (as needed throughout your work session and once your session has concluded) located by the black revolving door at the front of the Print Development Room. Use the funnel and pour slowly to prevent overflow and spills. Do not fill the waste container past the fill line. If the container is full, use an empty 5 gallon container from under the sink. Place it near the full container and leave a note on the form inside the Film Development Room. Contaminated solid waste is discarded in the locking solid waste bucket.

Rinse and stack trays, rinse tongs, and straighten work areas, making sure that all exposure lamps and timers are turned off and unplugged. Be sure that no water lines are left running as you depart.

Use Extreme Caution

The pre-coated cyanotype paper we use at UTD is safe. However, if you were to mix your own chemistry using a liquid or powder readily available online, the hazards increase. The key compound needed in Cyanotype chemistry—potassium ferrocyanide—can break down on contact with UV light or acids, or heated to mid-summer temperatures, and release hydrogen cyanide gas (HCN), which can be as toxic as nerve gas.