



Alternative Photography Summer School

Kitchen Chemigrams

Make prints using chemistry,
black and white darkroom paper and sunlight



You will need

- Black and white darkroom paper
- Soda crystals
- Vitamin C powder or tablets
- Instant coffee or 30g of green foliage
- Darkroom fixer or saline solution
- paintbrush and/or sponge
- Measuring jug
- Two glass or metal mixing bowls
- Freshly picked plants
- A couple of empty bottles
- Apron
- Gloves
- Paintbrush and/or sponges

Chemigrams were said to be invented by Pierre Cordier, but artists such as Dora Maar also occasionally used the technique before the name was coined.

Recipe source from www.caffenol.org

Method

Although this process uses darkroom materials, no darkroom is needed and this entire process can be done in the light. Select the plants you wish to make prints with; leaves and flowers are good choices.

If you're using vitamin C tablets, crush these into a powder to make it easier to dissolve.

In one bowl mix together:

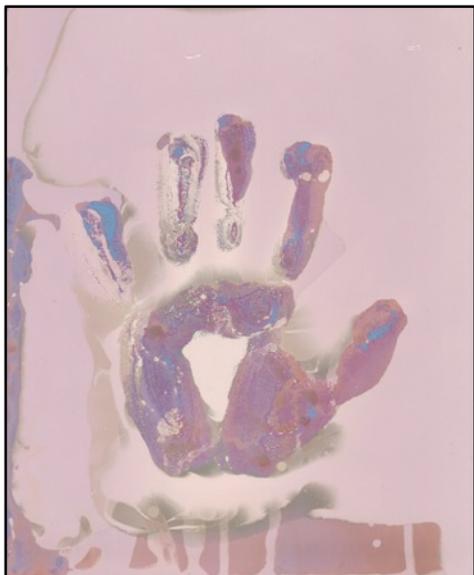
4 level teaspoons soda crystals with **200ml** tap water with EITHER **6 rounded teaspoons** coffee with **150ml** tap water OR **30g** plant matter which has been steeped overnight in **300ml** boiling water (if you're using plant matter you won't need to mix the soda crystals with water in the first part of the recipe, just add it straight to this water once you've steeped the plant and strained it) Stir to ensure the soda crystals dissolve.

Then add **1 teaspoon** of vitamin C to your solution and allow this to fully dissolve.

These developers can be kept in the fridge in bottles for further use for around two weeks and can also be used to develop black and white film!



Once everything has fully dissolved get darkroom paper ready by placing it on a covered surface with the emulsion side facing up.



Making prints

Dip your plants into the solution. Let any excess solution drip off and place the items onto the darkroom paper. Leave these to sit on the paper for around fifteen minutes. If you have a paintbrush or sponge, experiment by dipping these into the solution and putting them on the paper. The longer the solution is left on the paper, the darker it becomes.

To experiment further you can use resists such as vaseline, syrups and oils. Put these on the paper before you add the chemistry and this will stop the chemical reaction.

Using fix

After you've made your prints you can choose to fix them.

This stage isn't necessary, but your image will continue to change colour without this. You can also use your paintbrush or sponge to be selective about where to put the fix on the paper. Using darkroom fixer, make up the solution as it instructs you to do so on the bottle. Make sure your apron is on at this stage, as the fixer can stain your clothes and use gloves to protect your skin. Fully submerge your paper into the solution. Leave this for roughly three minutes, then wash the print.

Diluted fixer can be poured into a spare bottle to keep for future use. Alternatively take this to your local darkroom or donate it to a friend who uses darkroom chemistry. Fix needs to be recycled properly and not poured down the drain. If you're concerned about this, an alternative to fixer is a saline solution (roughly 5 tablespoons of table salt in 300ml of water) which will take longer to react, but should have the same effect.

The developer can also be transferred to a bottle and will keep for up to a week, but when pouring down the sink it's best practice to dilute it as much as possible so as not to have too much of an impact on the environment.

Artists for inspiration:

Christina Z. Anderson:

www.christinazanderson.com

Janelle Young: www.janelleyoung.com

Pete Webb: www.peter-webb.co.uk

Hannah Fletcher: www.hannahfletcher.com



Image developed using the plant-based recipe and Ilford HP5 film

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