

# Camera-less Nature Photograph

Inspired by Imogen Cunningham's *Magnolia Blossom*

## Key Concepts

- Shape
- Composition
- Camera-less photography

## Materials

- Construction paper (darker colors like blue, green, purple, or brown work best)
- Objects found in nature, like leaves, flowers, shells, or rocks, but any non-transparent object will work.
- Sunlight

## Introduction

- What do you see in this artwork? List or draw the shapes, lines, and objects you see.
- Does anything you have noticed in this artwork remind you of something in your own life? If so, what are you reminded of?
- What would you call this photograph if you had made it yourself?

## Instructions

1. Select a piece of construction paper.
2. Gather objects you find in nature, like leaves, flowers, shells, and rocks—any nontransparent item will do! Tip: look for objects with a well-defined shape.
3. In a sunny spot, place your objects on the construction paper in an arrangement that you like. If you are working outside, consider securing light objects in place with clear tape, a piece of plastic wrap over the whole paper with weights securing the edges, or by weighing down your objects with heavy items (like rocks that are smaller than your selected objects).
4. Leave your composition in the sun for at least five hours.
5. Remove the objects to reveal your camera-less photograph which is also known as a cyanotype or sun print!

Variation: Use special sun print paper which can be found at art supply stores.



## Relevant Information

Imogen Cunningham (American, 1883–1976) grew up in Seattle, Washington, but spent most of her life in the San Francisco Bay Area. When Cunningham was eighteen years old, she bought her first camera and after college worked in the studio of photographer Edward S. Curtis. The artist later opened her own studio and became known for her photographs of people. As she was raising her three children, she took up gardening and began photographing the plants and flowers in her garden. Her photographs of plants and flowers were so detailed that scientists used them in their studies. Between 1923–25, she did a number of photographs of magnolia flowers. Cunningham was a member of Group f/64, including Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, photographers who made sharp-focus images. In 1973, the Mayor of San Francisco declared November 12 Imogen Cunningham Day.

## Discussion

- What objects did you use to make your artwork? Why did you choose the objects you did?
- Describe the composition of your sun print. What inspired you to arrange the objects the way you did?
- Were you surprised by the final work?
- What do you like about your sun print?
- If you gave your work a title, what did you call it? Why did you select that title?