

THE HANDMADE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT

Film. Kodalith. Digital negatives.

An illustrated guide to alternative contact printing



FROM NEGATIVE TO PAPER

Three workflows. One physical connection between light and image.

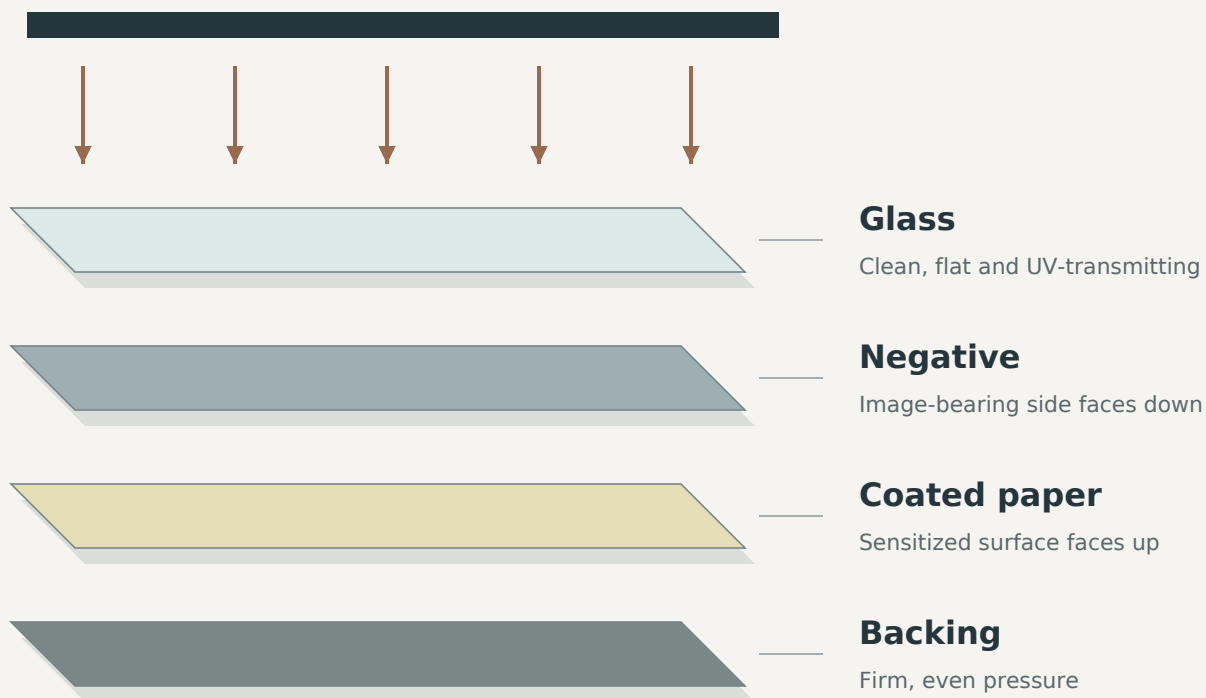
01

THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE

An image made by contact

The negative becomes a light-control mask. Dense areas hold light back; clear areas allow more light to reach the coating.

THE CONTACT FRAME



EXPLODED VIEW / ALL LAYERS CLOSE TIGHTLY FOR EXPOSURE

1 : 1

Negative size = image size

An 8 × 10 in. negative makes an 8 × 10 in. contact image.
Enlargement happens before contact printing.

DENSE NEGATIVE

Light print tone

MIDTONE NEGATIVE

Middle print tone

CLEAR NEGATIVE

Dark print tone

02

COMPARE THE CHOICES

Three routes to the print

Choose the method that fits your original image, desired print size and preferred way of controlling tone.



FILM NEGATIVES / THE IMAGE ALREADY EXISTS AS A PHYSICAL OBJECT

Camera film

START WITH

A developed camera negative.

Enlarged lith film

A small negative and an interpositive.

Digital negative

A digital photograph or a scan of film.

CONTROL TONE WITH

Camera exposure and film development.

Exposure and development at each copying stage.

File edits, printer settings and a calibrated curve.

CONSIDER

Image size is limited by the original negative.

Extra copying stages can compress the tones.

Printer, ink and transparency must be tested together.

03

THE ANALOG WORKFLOW

Build the larger negative

A conventional negative-to-negative enlargement needs an intermediate positive. Each photographic copy reverses the tones.

**NEGATIVE → POSITIVE → NEGATIVE**

The interpositive is a transparent positive image, not a paper print. Make it at the final size, then contact-copy it onto fresh film. [1]

01 Enlarge

Project the original negative onto film at the final image size. Process, wash and dry the interpositive.

02 Contact-copy

Place the dry interpositive against fresh film, emulsion to emulsion. Expose and process the final negative.

03 Test the tones

Contact-print the final negative on the intended paper and process. Use that print to judge the tonal range.

KODALITH IS NOT INHERENTLY CONTINUOUS-TONE FILM

Modified development can retain midtones, but highlights and shadows may compress. Test your specific film and developer; no universal dilution or time applies. [1, 2]

04

THE DIGITAL WORKFLOW

Translate pixels into light

Keep an editable positive master. Make a separate output version for your printer, transparency and chosen photographic process.



INKJET TRANSPARENCY / PRINT ON THE MEDIA'S COATED SIDE

01

Prepare

Set the crop, final size and tonal relationships. Retain detail in the positive master.

02

Transform

Invert and apply your tested curve in its required workflow position. Mirror once for ink-side-down contact.

03

Output

Use compatible film and saved print settings. Turn off automatic enhancements; let the ink dry fully.

A screen preview cannot verify UV density. Judge a contact print. [3]

05

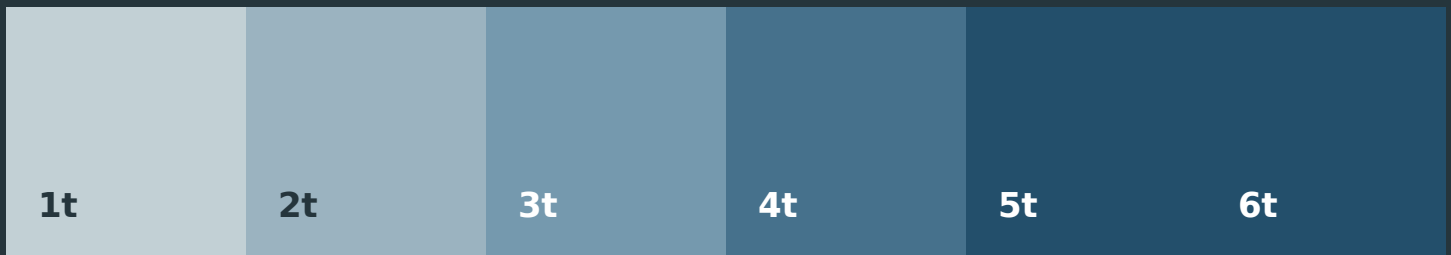
EXPOSURE & CALIBRATION

Let the test print decide

Keep your paper, coating, light, distance and processing consistent. Make one controlled change at a time.

01 / ESTABLISH THE BASE EXPOSURE

Expose through clear, unprinted transparency. Process and dry the test, then find the shortest exposure that reaches the deepest useful print tone. [3]

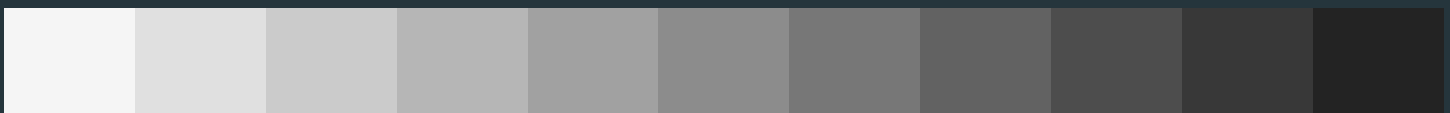


SHORTER

LONGER

Illustrative tones only. t represents your chosen test interval, not a prescribed time. Evaluate dry results; sunlight may vary during the test.

02 / CHECK THE FULL TONAL SCALE



Print a step scale using the image settings, then contact-print it at the base exposure. Check highlight and shadow separation before refining the midtone curve. [3]

PALE DETAIL

DISTINCT MIDTONES

OPEN SHADOWS

06

THE WORKING PRINT

Coat. Contact. Expose.

A cyanotype sequence. Follow your chosen sensitizer's instructions for mixing, exposure and washing. [4]



A THIN, EVEN COATING / DRY AWAY FROM SUNLIGHT AND UV

01 Coat & dry

Apply sensitizer to tested, wet-strength paper. Dry away from UV.

02 Contact & expose

Put the negative image side against the coating. Clamp and expose.

03 Wash

Wash as directed to remove unused sensitizer.

04 Dry & evaluate

Let the sheet dry and the blue mature before judging tone.

Other processes need their own finishing steps. Cyanotype washing does not replace the processing sequence for salt, Van Dyke or platinum/palladium prints.

07 TROUBLESHOOTING & REFERENCE

Read the finished print

Evaluate a fully dry print. Inspect the negative separately to distinguish a printing problem from a negative problem.

IF YOU SEE...	CHECK...	THEN TRY...
Soft detail	Contact, curled film or incorrect image-side orientation.	Flatten, clamp and place the image side against the coating.
Weak dark tones	Exposure, coating consistency and processing.	Run a clear-base exposure test before editing the negative.
Lost highlights	Excess negative density or a mismatched tonal curve.	Check the step scale; adjust the negative, then test again.
Lines or streaks	Printer banding, uneven coating or film-development marks.	Inspect the negative and isolate the source first.

MAKE THE NEXT PRINT REPEATABLE

Record the negative version, paper, coating, light and distance, exposure, processing and dry-print observations.

READING & TECHNICAL REFERENCES

- [1] Sarah van Keuren / A Non-Silver Manual: Enlarged negatives
- [2] Lloyd Godman / Negatives: Techniques for alternative processes
- [3] Christina Z. Anderson & Ron Reeder / Digital negatives
- [4] Jacquard / Cyanotype and product instructions