

ANNA VAN VOORHIS

ARTIST STATEMENT

A few years ago I began thinking of photographs as “time transects:” small slivers shaved from reality that represent a single, decontextualized moment in time. Regarding photographs this way prompted me to wonder if it were possible to expand the amount of information a surface could archive. Instead of documenting my experiences of time with a camera, which typically records less than a second, could I use other means and technologies to represent durational, lived experiences? This line of inquiry led me to cyanotype: a slow, photosensitive chemistry, most famous for its use in reproducing architectural drawings, i.e. blueprints. Cyanotype’s relative insensitivity to light made it the perfect candidate for recording longer periods of time and ultimately allowed me to capture the choreography of shadows that bodies, objects and the sun cast onto the surfaces of my kitchen.

To record this dance, I draft and cut hundreds of irregular paper shapes, each one corresponding with a surface in my kitchen: the table top, the scalloped splat of a chair, the window sill. I coat the pieces with the sunny yellow of unexposed cyanotype emulsion and methodically tape down each intricate piece of paper to its twin in the kitchen. Then I wait. Over the course of a three day exposure, the furniture darkens from lemon to chartreuse to dusky blue, depending on the intensity of the sunlight that reaches it. As the paper exposes, it captures traces of daily motion: the meals I eat on the table, my body as I sit in a chair, the sun as it arcs across the sky. After the pieces have finished exposing, I unwrap the paper casings from the furniture and wash them to remove excess chemistry. Then I reassemble them into blue and white paper ghosts, no longer supported by their solid twins, archives of three days spent in my kitchen.