

Anna Atkins



the Woman who Made the World's First Photobook

An unusual scientific education for a woman of her time

- Anna's father John George Children was a renowned chemist, mineralogist, and zoologist
- John was the first president of the Royal Entomological Society of London, which **opened doors** for Anna to participate in science that would not have been possible for many women at that time
- Anna created intricate shell drawings, used to illustrate her father's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells*
- Anna was elected a member of the London Botanical Society in 1839



Anna Atkins, Drawings for *Lamarck's Genera of Shells*, 1823

Photography

- Anna's father was friends with William Henry Fox Talbot, an English photography pioneer. He taught Anna to use his early photographic inventions
- Anna was known to have had access to a camera by 1841 but none of her camera-based photographs survive to this day

Cyanotype

What?

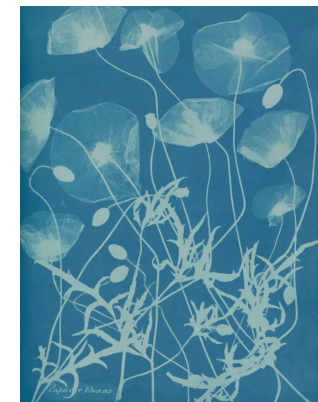
Commonly called **sun printing**, cyanotype is a photographic printing process whereby paper is painted with a chemical solution that turns blue when exposed to UV light. Specimens covering the paper block the light, and therefore the chemical reaction, leaving behind a white imprint. Later this process was used to reproduce engineering drawings, a.k.a. *blueprints*.

Who?

- Sir John Herschel, an Atkins family friend, invented the cyanotype photographic process in 1842
- Within a year of its invention, Atkins applied the process to algae
- Anna self-published her images in the first installment of *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* in 1843. It is considered **the first book illustrated with photographic images**



Anna Atkins, "Dictyota dichotoma, in the young state; and in fruit"



Anna Atkins, "Alaria esculenta"



Anna Atkins, "Ptilota sericea"



Anna Atkins; 1799 – 1871; Kent, England

