

## Shroud, Liberation Day in Paris



Figure 1: Photograph that once hung in the library of the Fondation des États-Unis, Paris

### 1. Introduction

This project emerged from the desire to make a cyanotype print of a large photograph that had been displayed in the library of the Fondation des États-Unis (FEU), Paris, shown in Fig. 1. Though I have not personally verified this, the picture was supposedly taken on Liberation Day in the very same FEU library in 1945. At some point in 2023 or 2024, Joelle Antonia Santiago got hold of the photo and displayed it in her room on the fifth floor of the FEU. Just before moving out, she entrusted me with it.

### 2. Methodology

I had two options. Option 1 was to digitize the photo and then make a large negative-image transparency, which would then produce a positive cyanotype print. Option 2 was to use the photograph directly to produce a cyanotype.

I saw a major flaw with Option 1: the need for a transparency. These are usually obtained from print shops and essentially consist of digital ink on plastic. They are predictable and straightforward to produce. But the transparency would not hold any meaning for me, being an object generated by a machine operated by a stranger.

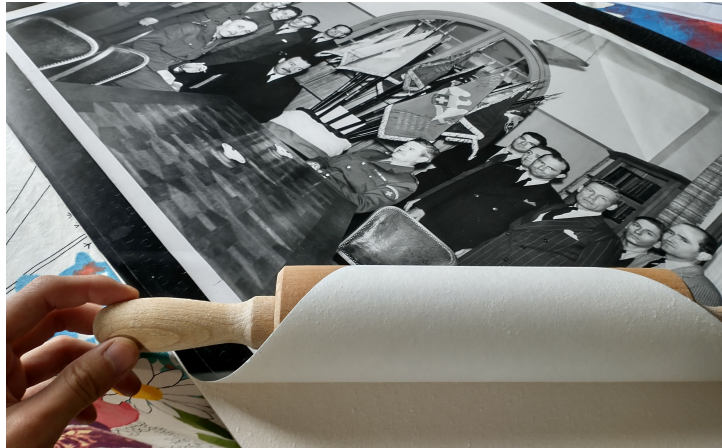


Figure 2: Peeling the photograph off the cardboard support

I chose Option 2 because I believed the contact of the original photograph on the cyanotype, without any intermediary, would feel more vital and sensual. It would be like the Holy Shroud, direct witness to the face of Jesus, imprinted as a negative image as proof of its authenticity.

Option 2, however, required a little more work. The photo was printed onto a piece of cardboard. So I first peeled off the image layer, as shown in Fig. 2. Yet there remained thick layer of paper that rendered the peeled image opaque. I would have to remove the paper while preserving the thin glossy film that the image was printed on.

To do so, I used a photo transfer gel, a sort of glue that would stick to the image film. Once hardened onto some surface, I could then apply water to the paper on the back, and then rub it off – thus separating the film from the paper. It was time-consuming work. In the end, it was not possible to remove all the paper. Furthermore, I used a piece of glass that was not quite large enough for the entire image, so I had to crop it. But the film was now transparent enough to be used for a cyanotype.

In October 2025, I attempted several exposures in my apartment in Paris. But the sunlight was oblique and did not shine in my apartment for very long. No image was developed. I did not have much more time because I moved out in November. So I packed up the image film and re-coated sheets, hoping to try again in a better season.

I tried again at home in Maryland, April 2026, with strong sunlight and clear skies now common. I flattened out the image film and prepared it for exposure (Fig. 3). I placed the film on the sheet, under a transparent plastic cover, and put it in direct sunlight for 30 minutes around 1:30 p.m. I decorated the borders with rolls of copper wire and inductor core plates which were available in my home. The final result is shown in Fig. 4.

Though far from perfect, many details have been well-captured, including some facial expressions. Around the edges are evidence that I did not fully rub away the layer of paper, leading to less exposure. The ghostly nature of the negative figures and the graininess, however, are perhaps fitting for a photo of these men from a past century, awkwardly posed for the liberation of the FEU after World War II, in a space now used mostly by undergrads studying abroad in Paris looking for love.



Figure 3: Exposing the cyanotype in April 2026, Maryland

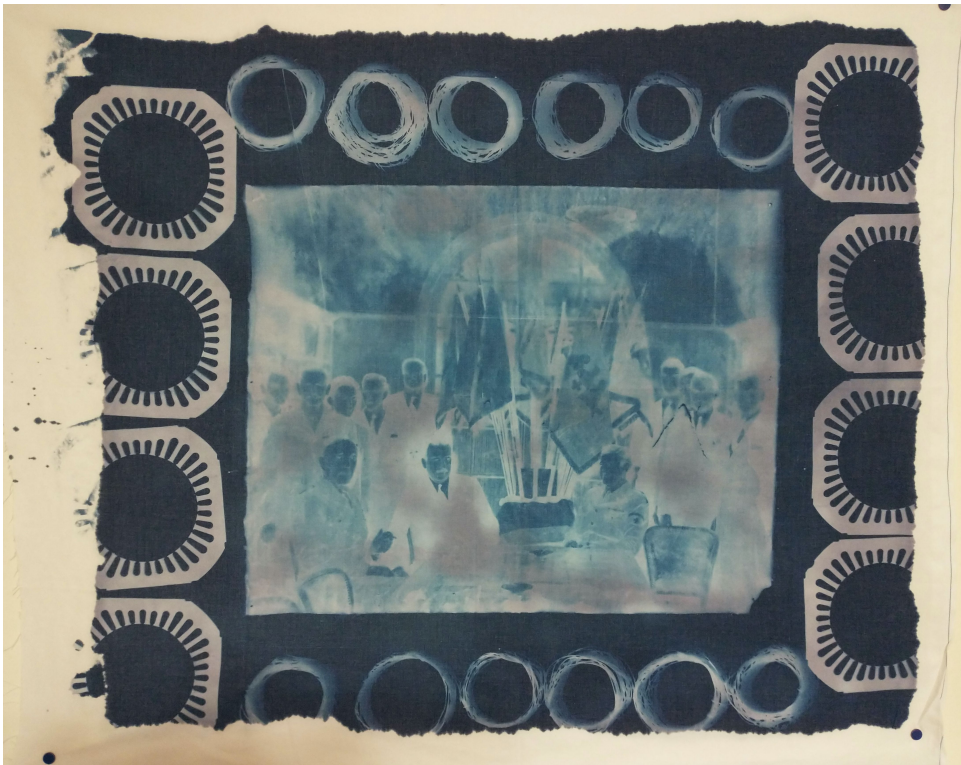


Figure 4: Final result from exposure