

# Works

Minerals, Ongoing

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Houses, Prefab Architectures in Japan, 2017

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# Biography

Francesco Del Conte (1988, Milan) is a visual artist, photographer and researcher living and working in Brussels. In 2012 he achieved a bachelor's degree in printmaking at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin. Because of his interest in photography, he moved to Belgium in 2013 to study at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels, where he graduated with a master's degree in fine arts in the photography department. In the first ten years of his practice, Del Conte has investigated, in particular, the design and the history of a series of technologies employed in architecture and the industrial and artisan fields. On the line between a very objective feel and an enigmatic atmosphere, these photographic works are displayed as gelatin silver prints and as slide projections in dialogue with the exhibition spaces. In 2016 he was invited in Japan by the Centre for Contemporary Art CCA Kitakyushu to attend a seven-month fellowship program which will be very significant to his practice.

After this period, Del Conte shaped a new approach to the photographic medium to create new insights about photography itself. This was partly stimulated by his interest in using large-format cameras. The use of this equipment led him to explore photography's potential and investigate the structure of the medium, breaking it down into its fundamental elements: electromagnetic energy and time. Today, he is particularly engaged in examining some key aspects of the medium: the interplay between magic and science, the tension between abstraction and reality, and the enduring conflict between objectivity and subjectivity. In his current projects, he considers the camera as a light recorder rather than a tool that allows the author to explore the concepts of narrative, space, and composition. This change of paradigm led the artist to produce a new body of work intertwined with other fields such as mineralogy, astronomy, and color science. In 2023 he moved back to Belgium to conduct photographic research at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp within the Thinking Tools research group. Del Conte's works are part of private and public collections and have been exhibited internationally.

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# Minerals, Ongoing



*Minerals* is the last work of a group of projects investigating the essential qualities of the photographic medium through the observation of light and optical phenomena. The work displays ten black-and-white photographs of minerals characterized by a different reflectance index. The ten shades of gray recall those of the Zone System, a technique created by the famous American photographer Ansel Adams in the mid-twentieth century. This approach has defined the methodology of black-and-white photography, influencing its development worldwide both on a professional and amateur level. Based on the author's total control over the medium, this theoretical-practical method centers on the idea of pre-visualization of the final image. The Zone System involves rendering every detail of the photographed scene according to a precise shade of gray determined in advance by the author. Following this method, the photographer intends not to record reality but reinterpret it with a pictorialist spirit.

The selection of the minerals used for the work was determined solely by a single factor: the ability of the materials to reflect and absorb the electromagnetic spectrum visible to the human eye. The collection starts from the pure white of Selenite up to the deep black of Obsidian - actually not a mineral but a glass of volcanic origin. Each specimen between the two extremes corresponds to a different shade of gray: Calcite, Manganocalcite, Gallite, Franklinite, Hematite, Green Tourmaline, and Black Tourmaline. To create the work, the artist photographed each sample, positioned on a medium gray background, in the same conditions. Exposure time, framing, and lighting remained unchanged in each shot. Subsequently, the ten 4x5 sheet films were developed and printed following constant times and contrast. As opposed to the principles of the Zone System, the process generated a series of shades

depending only on the chemical and physical characteristics of the objects used. This gray-scale excludes any aesthetic choice. Through this simple set of rules, Del Conte raises a more complex question: what is photography, if not the way a given material reflects light, and how the photosensitive support records this flux of photons? The procedure carried out by the artist suggests a provocative conclusion: the most important thing in the making of a photograph is how the physical and chemical structure of a material reverberates the beam of light illuminating it.

This statement contrasts the current photographic practice, mainly based on digital technologies. Shifting from the Zone System's approach, today's imaging technology is driven by algorithms whose functioning is unknown to the public. Among other tasks, they determine the tonal range of the images produced with smart-phones, digital cameras, and even post-production software and apps. Del Conte's intention is not to deny technological evolution nor look at a past era with melancholy. Artificial intelligence and algorithmic manipulation have entered all aspects of our life, even those somewhat more relevant than visual arts. Though, it is a process that must be welcomed with the proper level of understanding. Progress simplifies our reality but, on the other hand, removes awareness from our actions. With *10 Minerals 10 Grays*, the artist brings us back to the materiality of the light-sensitive medium and warns us that, in the end, photography is just a question of matter and light.

**Fig.1.8** The coast between Liguria and Tuscany where the artist collected some samples for the research, c-prints, 120x100 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2021



Fig.2 Selenite, gelatin silver print, variable dimensions, ED 5+2 AP, 2022



Fig.3 Obsidian, gelatin silver print, variable dimensions, ED 5+2 AP, 2022

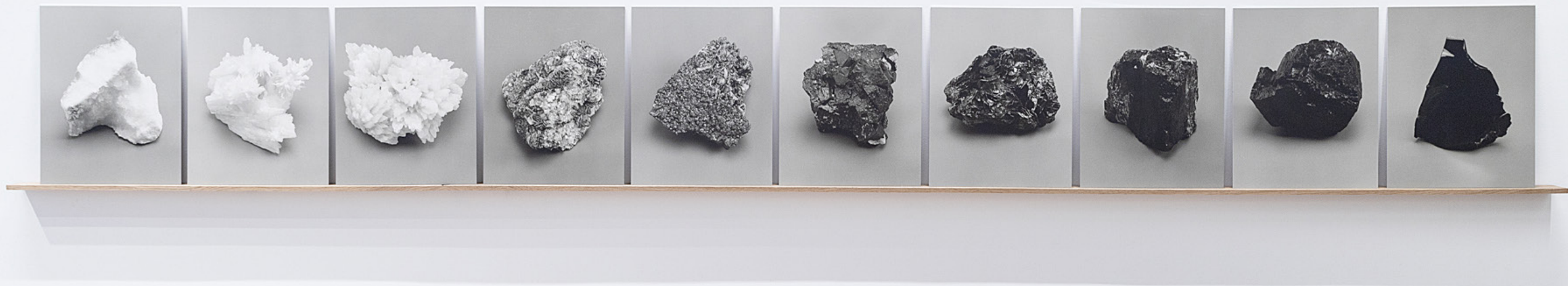


Fig.4 Franklinitite, gelatin silver print, variable dimensions, ED 5+2 AP, 2022

Fig.5 Hematite, gelatin silver print, variable dimensions, ED 5+2 AP, 2022



In the next pages:  
Fig.6,7 Installation view, Paolo Pessarelli Studio, Milan, 2022







# The Chromatic Illusion within the Photographic Universe, Ongoing

## Subjects and Questions

The Chromatic Illusion within the Photographic Universe is a practice-based research project that aims to examine the hidden impact technology has on color rendering within the photographic. Starting from the realization that color is always artificial in photography, I will conduct a series of scientific experiments that will strip photography down to its very essence: the action of light on photosensitive materials. These experiments will address the following research questions:

- Given that color in photography is always manufactured and never merely registered, what influence does the chosen technology have on the produced color charts? Would it be possible to link different worldviews to these different color charts?
- What is the influence of a given culture on the development of color technology? Do the cultural stratifications of a geographic area determine how visual technologies decode colors?
- What remains of the chromatic heritage left by past technologies? For instance: when a certain photographic film is discontinued, is it possible to talk about extinct colors?

## Theoretical and Artistic Framework

In Western culture, since Aristotle's time, the discrimination against color has taken a number of forms, some technical, some moral, some racial, some sexual, some social. Color is considered secondary to drawing, form, and structure — *disegno* versus *colore* — but its definition and understanding is very dear to the visual arts. In 2008, the Museum of Modern Art of New York presented *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to today*, a major exhibition addressing the impact of mass-produced, ready-made color on the art of the past sixty years. In the exhibition

catalog, curator Ann Temkin pointed out that «The search for universal truths about color dates back to ancient analogies between color and the four humors or the four elements. But anthropological studies revealing vastly different, even contradictory practices of nomenclature among cultures indicate that any universality in the experience of color is an illusion».

My research arises from a chromatic impossibility: the attempt to accurately record the colors of the sky at dusk through the photographic medium. During the so-called Blue Hour, the horizon blurs into flaming reds, cloudy whites, crystal light blues, and deep dark blues. After a series of tests in which I've tried to depict these hues, I realized that digital and chemical photography could not fully grasp this chromatic moment. The sky turning red is one of the most shared subjects in our virtual society. Yet, these images show a closed chromatic scale compared to the natural one, which I would define as open and endless. Through photographic means, twilight's vibrancy is not reproducible. Color, in fact, is not a physical quantity to measure but the human response to different light wavelengths. Since the mid-19th-century, the photography industry has tried to mimic this response through various stratagems, artifices relying on the available technologies. As opposed to painting, where real colors are used, film photography approximates the idea of color using filters and dye couplers embedded in the silver emulsion. Digital imaging uses codecs, algorithms that translate into hues the photons recorded by the sensor. In her work *Standard Universal: 256*, artist Angela Bulloch emphasizes technology's impact on artistic decisions concerning color representation. She designed a wooden box containing an RGB additive light system capable of generating millions of colors. Connected to customized software, the monitor shows only the 256-color palette of the Macintosh OS 9, the then-current Apple op-

erating system. When operating in this color setting, MAC OS 9 analyzed each color that was introduced into it from external sources, such as those in scanned photographs, and assigned each to its closest match in hue within the limited 256-color range. Artists F&D Cartier study how colors evolve according to photography's hidden materiality. In the work *Wait and See*, they «use expired photographic papers dating from the years 1890 to 2000. Their exposure in the exhibition space triggers an ongoing process of slow change as their appearance constantly alters. Their radically simplified experiment, designed to record light and time, connects back to the medium's early days», delivering a surprising color chart defined by the environment and the emulsions' chemical composition.

My project will expand this contemporary art context, deepening the idea of standardized colors and exploring the raw photographic material. Referring to Vilém Flusser's notions of black box and program, I will seek to produce non-redundant images carrier of information, promoting an unconventional approach to the medium. My inquiry will study how photosensitive supports and output devices record, render and display the visible spectrum. I will unfold the chromatic differences shown by photographic films, digital sensors, monitor screens, and chemical papers. In addition, I will compare systems of different periods and geographic areas. Finally, I will examine the potential of old expired films. Although their original color chart can be considered extinct, they still have a chromatic strength to explore, shaped by the passing of time.

## Methodology

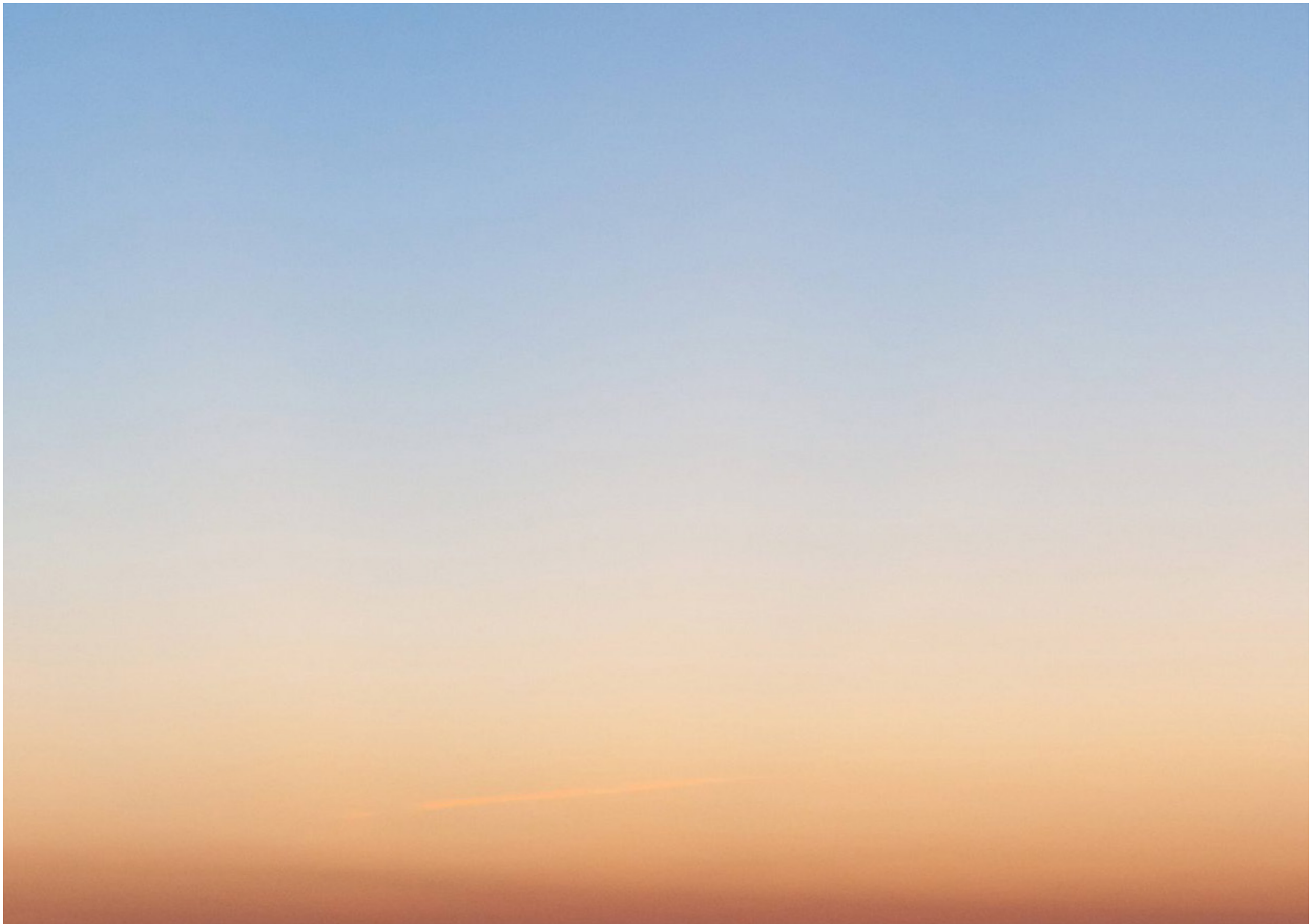
I will develop my project through photographic experiments, re-enacting those carried out in the 1660s by Isaac Newton with sunlight and prisms. My research will pres-

ent a collaboration performed by three actors: the photographic materials, myself, and an artificial rainbow - an optical phenomenon showing the spectrum's colors at their purest state. In a dark room and through a diffraction grating, I will decompose a light beam - whose CRI is nearly the same as the sun - into the visible spectrum. I will set a modified view camera facing the projection so that parts of the rainbow pass through it. With a slider, I will move at regular intervals the apparatus along the length of the projection. Then, I will record the same hues with different films and various digital sensors attachable to the light-recorder. I will detect between 20 and 30 portions of the rainbow, a collection of color interpretations ranging from red to violet. To work in the most pristine way, the camera lens will be removed but not the shutter. The shutter will allow repeating the exact exposure times in each working session.

The research will center on the diversity of the visual recordings. In the next stage, I will verify how these are rendered by different types of outputs: chemical papers and monitors. For example, the same shade of green will be recorded and translated in multiple ways according to the technology employed. I will not consider the composition of the resulting images or narrative and aesthetic aspects. Instead, I will cooperate with the photographic elements in an alternative way: the apparatus will be modified and opened up, and the supports will be considered just a surface sensitive to light, not a place to inscribe my narcissistic and descriptive desires.

In the next page:  
Fig. 1 The Sunset just before Twilight





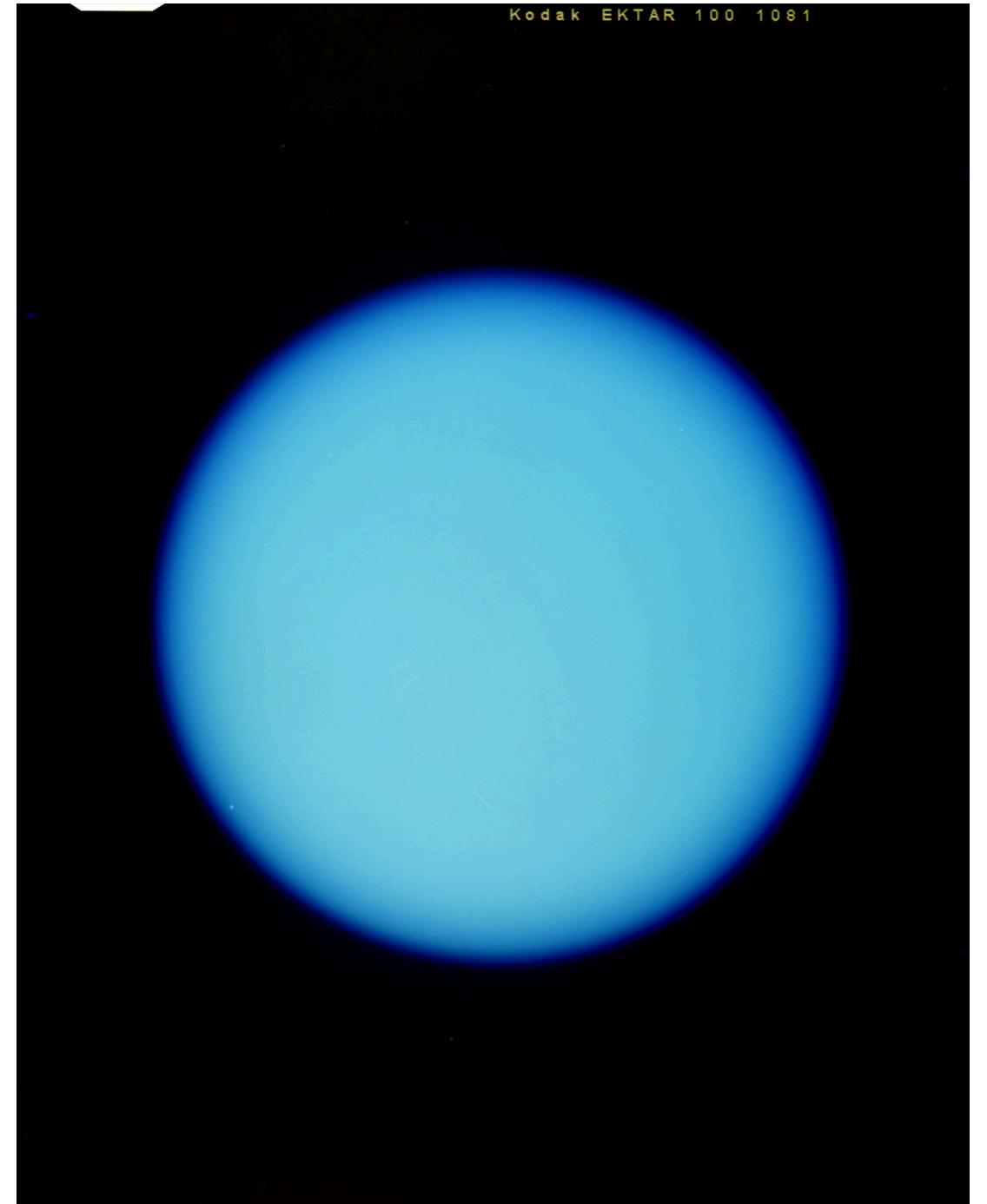


Fig.2.3 The Blue of the Sky on Kodak Ektar, 2021

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Fig. 4 The Artist Studio  
Fig. 5 Large Format Camera with Rainbow





# Ten Hues of the Rainbow Recorded with Two Different Color Negative Films

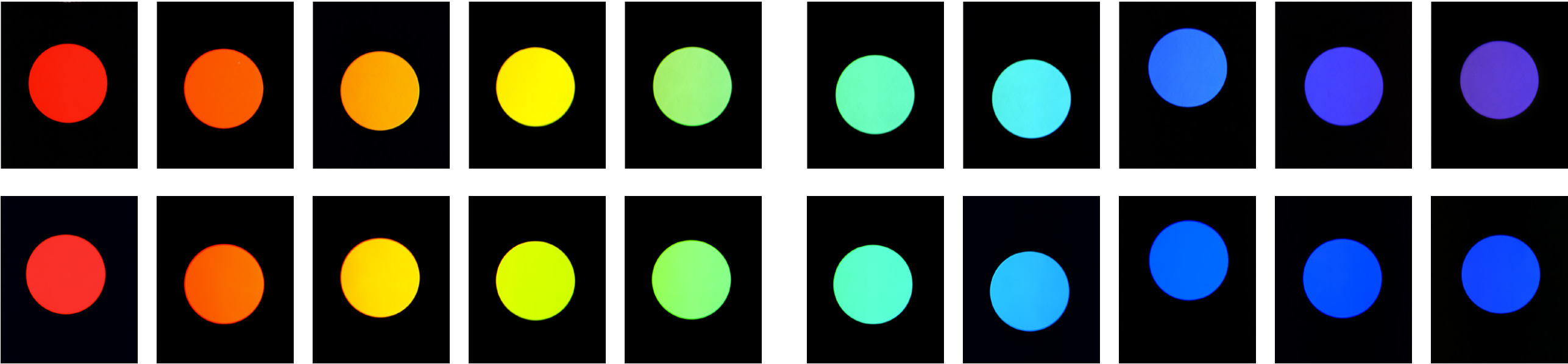
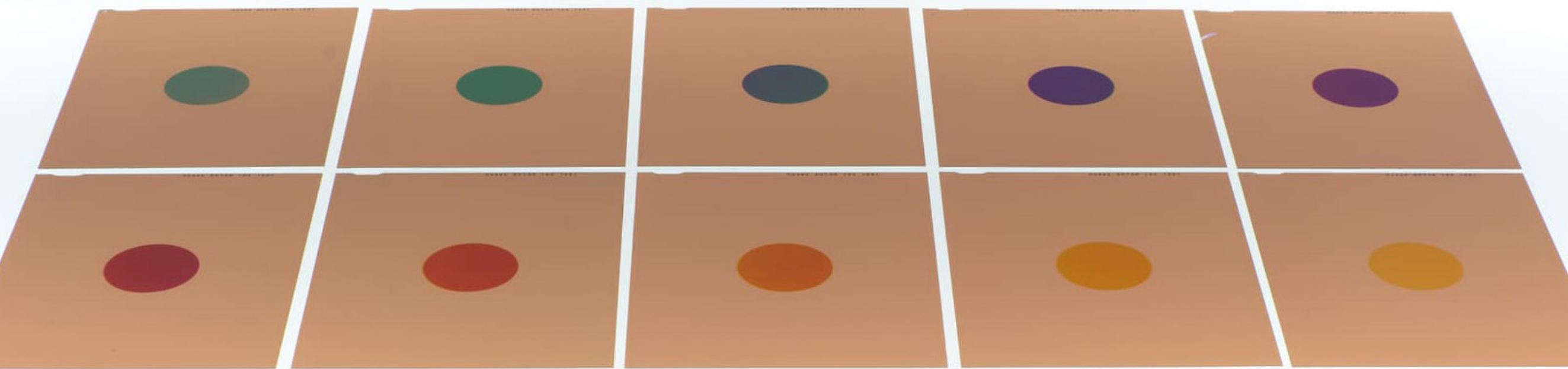


Fig.6 This test was produced in Turin during 2022, entirely by chemical means, except for the digitalization of the negatives necessary to this presentation



In the previous page:

Fig. 7 Ten 4x5 Color Negative Films Placed on a Light-Box Table, 2022

Fig. 8 Large Format Camera, Diffraction Grating and Light Source



In the next page:

The first outcome of the research, that is going to be displayed during the Brussels photo festival in January 2025, is titled B/W Rainbows and made of a composition of 60 gelatin silver prints. Twelve portions of a rainbow, produced in a studio with a light source and a diffraction grating, have been recorded with five types of films. On the left are the violets and blues; in the middle are the greens and the yellows; on the right are the oranges and the reds. Depicting the hues of a rainbow in grayscales is quite counterintuitive. Yet, translating into black and white the millions of colors our eyes see is what the light-sensitive tool has attempted to do since its inception. Each color corresponds to a different shade of gray, determined by the spectral characteristics of the given films. The black photographs indicate the lack of sensitivity to specific wavelengths, disclosing photography's partial blindness in color perception. This work, quite abstract and yet highly objective, aims to reveal the "genetic fingerprint" of various silver emulsions.

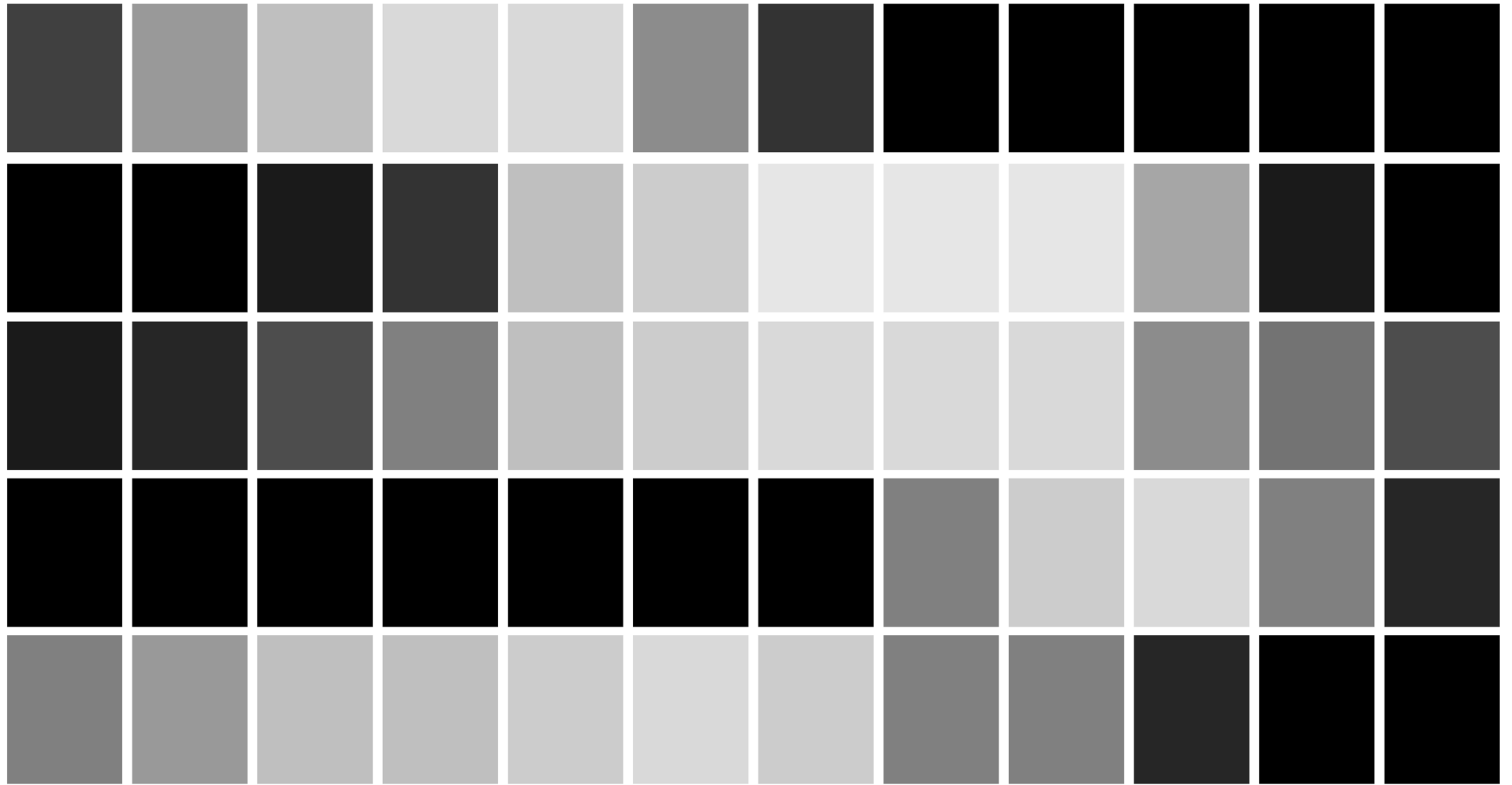


Fig. 9 B/W Rainbows, 60 gelatin silver prints, 30x40cm each, 2024





# Skyglow, an Inquiry about Light Pollution and the Natural Light of the Stars, Ongoing

In the last years, Francesco Del Conte has shifted his research toward the observation of natural and artificial luminous phenomena that present social and cultural concerns to further the understanding of the photographic medium within the realm of the visual arts. As discussed later, throughout the research project *Skyglow*, the light will be considered not as one of the elements that allow the functioning of the photographic technique but rather the object of study itself. This paradigm change enables a few thoughts concerning the nature of photography, the position of the author, and his/her relationship with the light-sensitive tool. The work *Skyglow* - an English word referring to the luminance of the night sky caused by artificial light sources - is on edge between contemporary art, astronomy, and environmental sciences and aims to question the photographic standard by addressing the effects produced by light pollution on sky observation.

## Environmental Context

Artificial light at night is called light pollution, and it has been defined as “globally one of the most widely distributed forms of anthropogenic pollution.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the object of an extensive number of scientific studies, as a global society, we are not so aware of it, or at least not as we are of other kinds of pollution. Humans have radically disrupted Earth’s predictable day and night cycle by lighting up the latter. However, artificial light at night has downsides for many creatures, including amphibians, birds, mammals, in-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Davies, Jonathan Bennie, Richard Inger, Kevin J. Gaston, “Artificial light alters natural regimes of night-time sky brightness”, *Scientific Reports* 3, 1722 (2013), p.1.

sects, and plants.<sup>2</sup>

Aesthetically, sky glow obscures our view of natural starlight and moonlight, and scientists have attempted to measure its impact. In 2001, the data showed that 60% of the world’s inhabited areas were affected by artificial sky glow,<sup>3</sup> while in 2016, the percentage of the world’s population affected by light pollution had increased to 83%.<sup>4</sup> The severity of the situation has led astronomers to campaign for darker skies in urban and suburban regions and to establish the first international dark sky parks for recreational stargazing. Moreover, it has been noted that increasing urbanized lifestyles and the loss of naturally lit sky were crucial to the “extinction of experience” and to distance people from the natural environment.<sup>5</sup>

## Theoretical Context

Since its inception, photography has been the subject of increasing debate within the art world. Around the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Baudelaire described it as a mere technical solution, «a refuge of all failed painters with too little talent.»<sup>6</sup> Just as in the

<sup>2</sup> Kevin J. Gaston, Jonathan Bennie, Thomas Wynter Davies, John Hopkins, “The ecological impacts of nighttime light pollution: a mechanistic appraisal”, *Cambridge Philosophical Society*, 88, 4 (2013), p. 915.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, “Artificial light”, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Fabio Falchi, Pierantonio Cinzano, Dan Duriscoe, Christopher C. M. Kyba, Christopher D. Elvidge, Kimberly Baugh, Boris A. Portnov, Nataliya A. Rybnikova and Riccardo Furgoni, “The new world atlas of artificial night sky brightness”, *Science Advances*, 2, 6 (2016), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Davies, “Artificial light”, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> Claudio Marra, *Fotografia e arti visive* (Roma: Carrocci Edi-

Fig.1 Installation view, 10 A.M. ART gallery, Milan, 2022

manufacturing world, machines began to replace humans in the very act of connecting them to their surrounding. If compared to other mimetic techniques, though, photography needs a visible referent, and the relationship between photography and reality is well described by Rosalind Krauss' words «A photograph is an index or trace, a significant mark that bears a connection to the thing it represents by having been caused, physically, by its referent.»<sup>7</sup> Light is the other essential condition that allows the photographic process to exist. Similar to the human eye, Cameras read how light is absorbed or reflected by the objects that compose the surrounding reality, to the point that we might even say that photographs are just an infinite set of luminous values. Yet, in opposition to this cynical consideration, it can be argued that photographers imbue the images with other values, such as emotional, conceptual, symbolic, and scientific.

On the pivotal role of the author, Susan Sontag has pointed out that « Even when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience [...] In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects. Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.»<sup>8</sup> Since the day Nicéphore Niépce produced the photograph that is universally recognized as the first in

history,<sup>9</sup> professional and amateur photographers have been portraying similar subjects with different technologies and awareness until today. After the digital and computer revolution, the number of photographs realized has increased dramatically. Nowadays, the existence of online archives that sell photographs made by professionals has not made people desist from taking pictures, even if there would be no need anymore on some levels. Nevertheless, people keep taking their photographs, mainly for biographical reasons and personal pleasure.

Contemporary artists began to make artworks using images found on social media, and a well-known case is the installation *24 Hours in Photos* presented by Erik Kessels in 2011 for the 10th anniversary of the FOAM Museum in Amsterdam. The project gathered every photo uploaded in a twenty-four-hour time frame on the image-sharing site Flickr; the images were then printed out and exhibited in one large space.

Even before the digital shift, Vilém Flusser identified the tendency to generate repetitive images, recognizing that «every photograph is a realization of one of the possibilities contained within the program of the camera. The number of such possibilities is large, but it is nevertheless finite: it is the sum of all those photographs that can be taken by a camera. It is true that one can, in theory, take a photograph over and over again in the same or a very similar way, but this is not important for the process of taking photographs. Such images are “redundant”: they carry no new information and are superfluous.»<sup>10</sup>

Light itself has rarely been the subject of photographic practice, but mainly the key that allows it to function. Del Conte's interest in moving the attention from the referent to this other element essential to the photographic process means to point the camera at light. This move involves a few questions: is it possible to produce not only reality interpretations by considering light the object of the research? For example, is it possible to create photographs that also carry information?

### Working method

These considerations led the artist to conceive an experimental process which in 2021 gave birth to the first composition of *Skyglow*. The methodology involves shooting photographs of the same constellations from several locations with different levels of light pollution. The settings of the large format camera, always aimed at the zenith of the sky, are the same in each place: type of lens, kind of film, aperture, point of focus, exposure time, and atmospheric conditions.

Following this set of rules, the only factor influencing the density of the photographic emulsion is the amount of artificial light recorded by the camera. Francesco Del Conte applied this method in three locations: the Tabernas Desert in Andalusia, the Italian Apennines in Emilia-Romagna, and Turin, where he lives. In each place, he has photographed the same region of the sky by using as coordinates three different stars: Vega, Altair, and Deneb, which are visible in the center of the pictures. The artist replicated the same 30-minute exposure by employing an astronomical device called equatorial mount, which allows the camera to be synchronized with the Earth's rotation and thus avoid star trails. Nine photographs, printed as gelatin silver prints, resulted from this research.

Del Conte did not choose these three stars for aesthetic nor narrative reasons, but because throughout summer, they are at the zenith of

the sky and, due to their high brightness, visible also from very light-polluted areas. The photographs can be looked at horizontally and vertically; there isn't an order, and they are just what they are: light's chemical and optical action onto the photosensitive emulsion. The artist has transformed the camera into a light recorder - a functional device - while the film behind the lens has become just a surface sensitive to light. Photography is no longer a tool for exploring the concepts of narrative, space, and composition but a carrier of valuable information independent of the author's interpretations. Del Conte attempts to use the light-sensitive technique analytically and objectively. In response to the iper-narcissistic application of the photographic medium within our digitalized society, he relinquishes his power to decide how the picture should look and confine his taste and subjective view of the world.

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tore, 2014), p.24

7 Rosalind Krauss, "Tracing Nadar", October, 5 (1978), p.34

8 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Groux, 1978), pp.3-4

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9 Italo Zannier, *Architettura e Fotografia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1991), p.10

10 Vilém Flusser, *Toward a Philosophy of Photography* (Berlin: European Photography Andreas Müller-Phole, 1983), p.26

In this radical version of the project, Del Conte has exposed several 4x5 films to light pollution for 1 hour. He did not use the equatorial mount and he did not focus the lens. Instead, the photographs show circles of different gradations according to the amount of artificial light recorded.

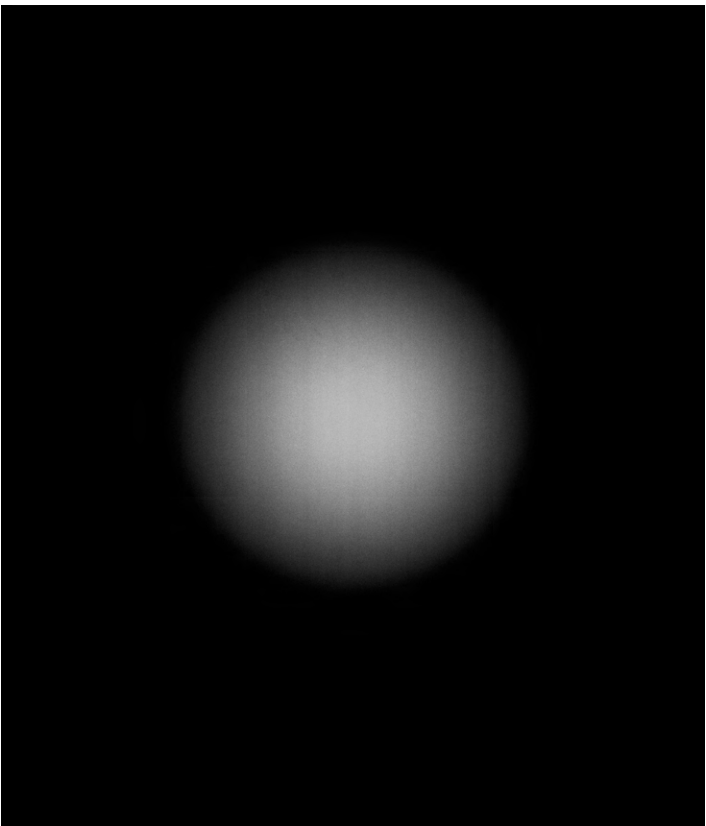
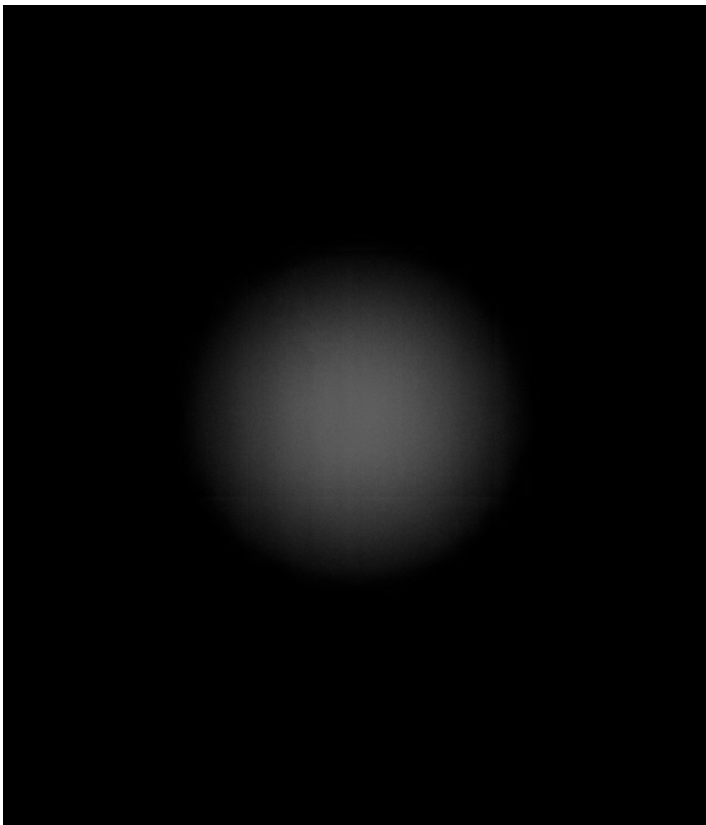


Fig. 2 Three gelatin silver prints, 100x80 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2023

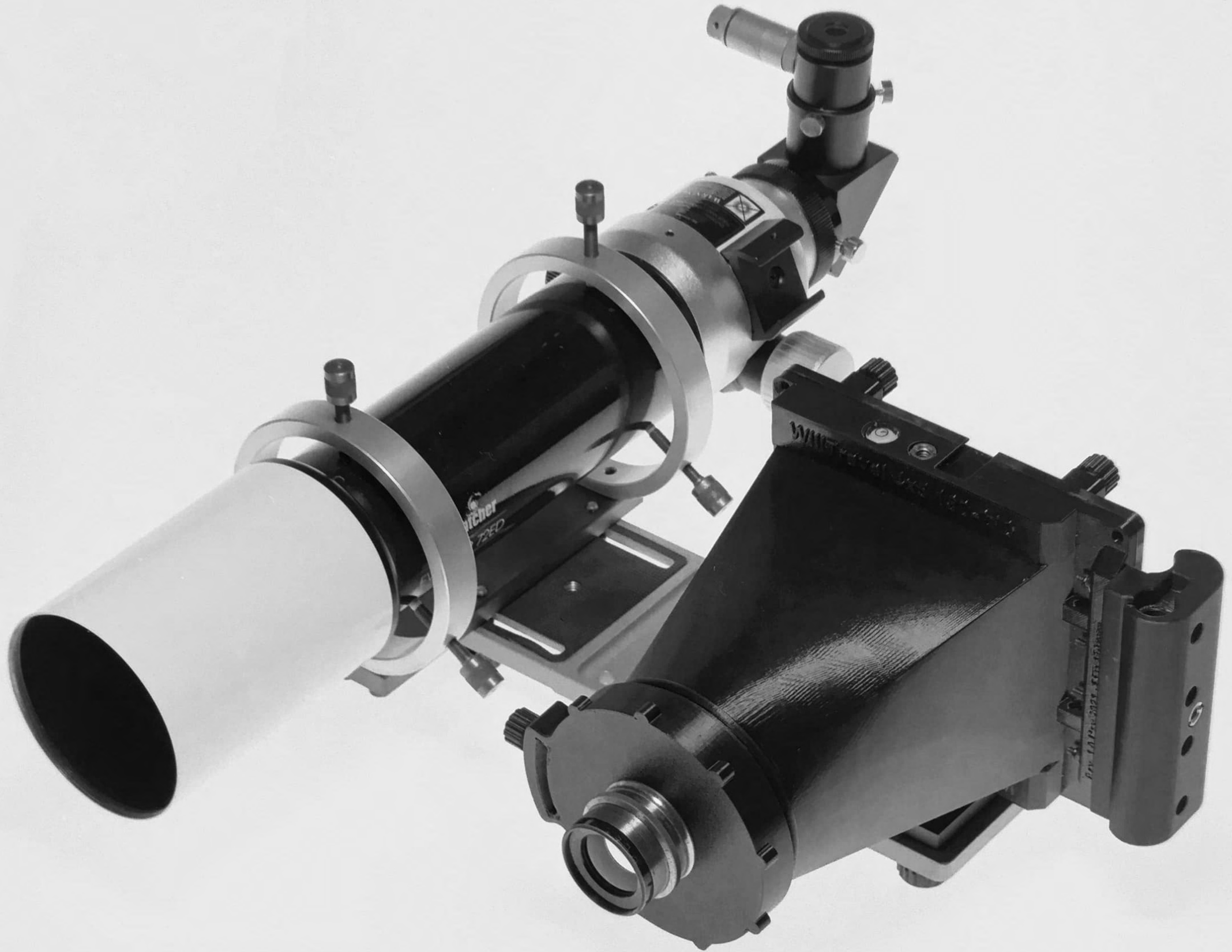


Fig. 3.5 Rural and Inner-City Sky, details, gelatin silver prints, 100x80 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2023  
Fig. 4 Val Veny





Image 01  
Image 02  
Image 03  
Image 04  
Image 05



With the aid of an equatorial mount, a sophisticated device used for astronomical observations, each photograph was the result of a 30-minute exposure. Three different locations were selected for this composition: the Tabernas Desert in Andalusia, the Italian Apennines in Emilia-Romagna and the city of Turin.

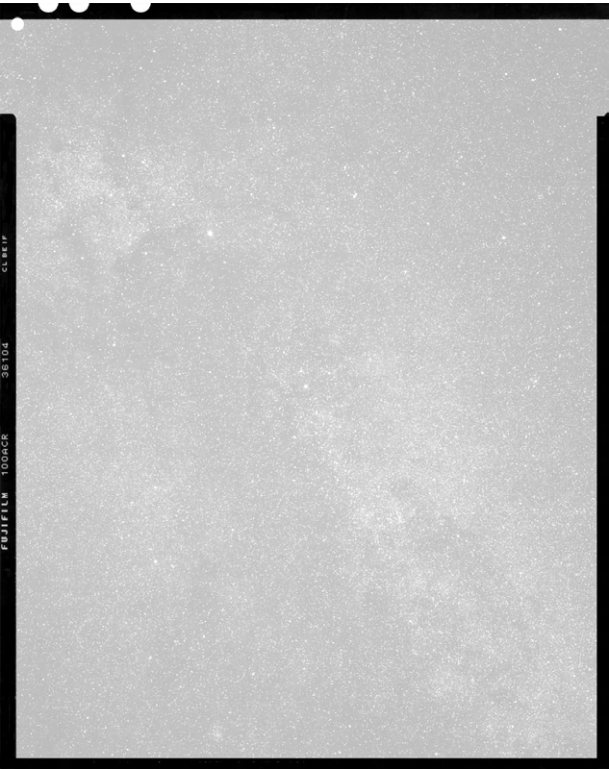
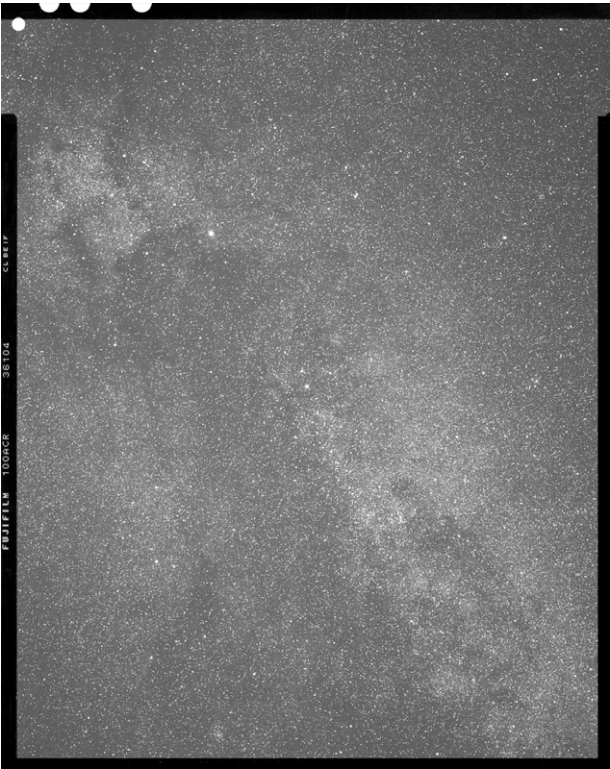
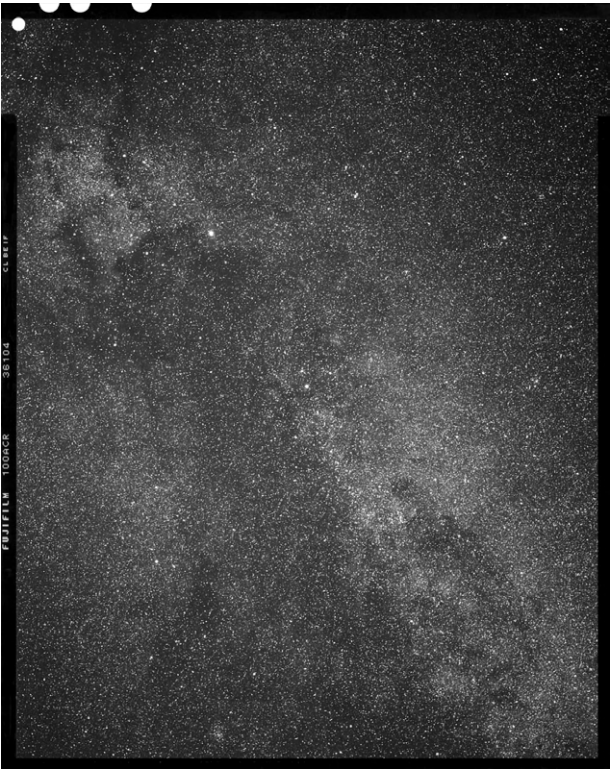
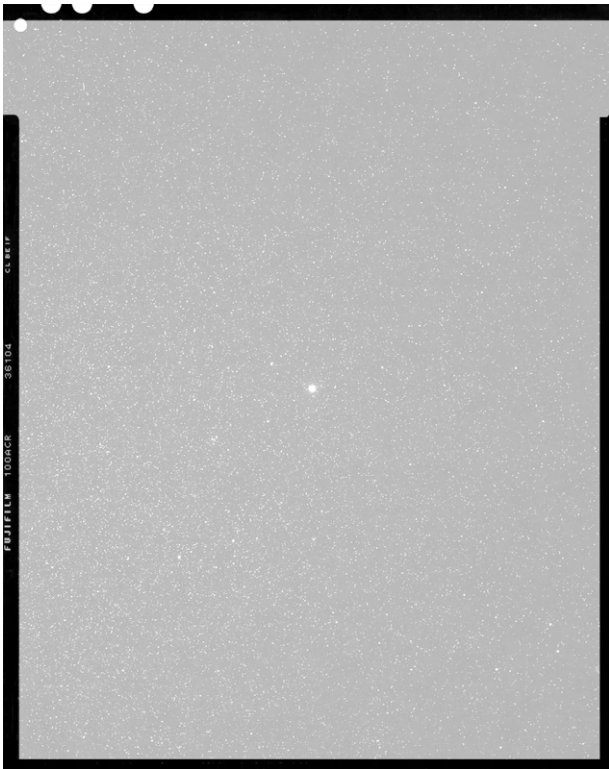
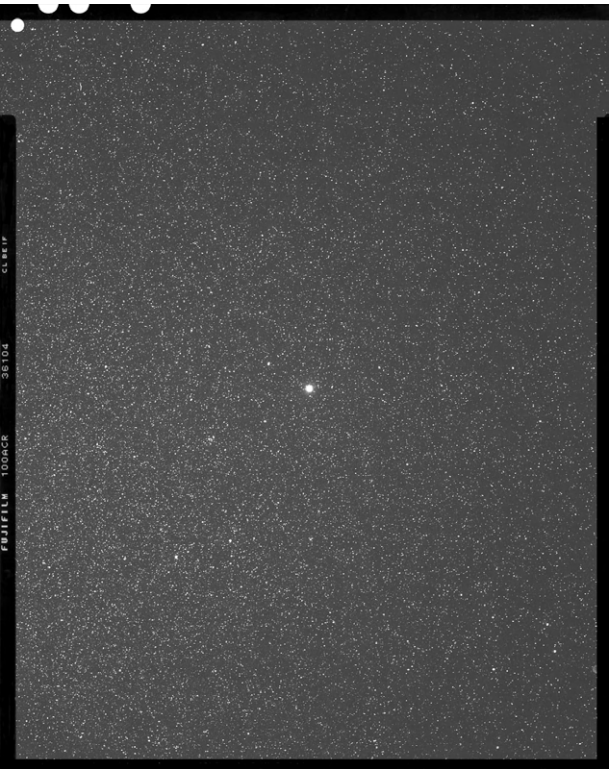
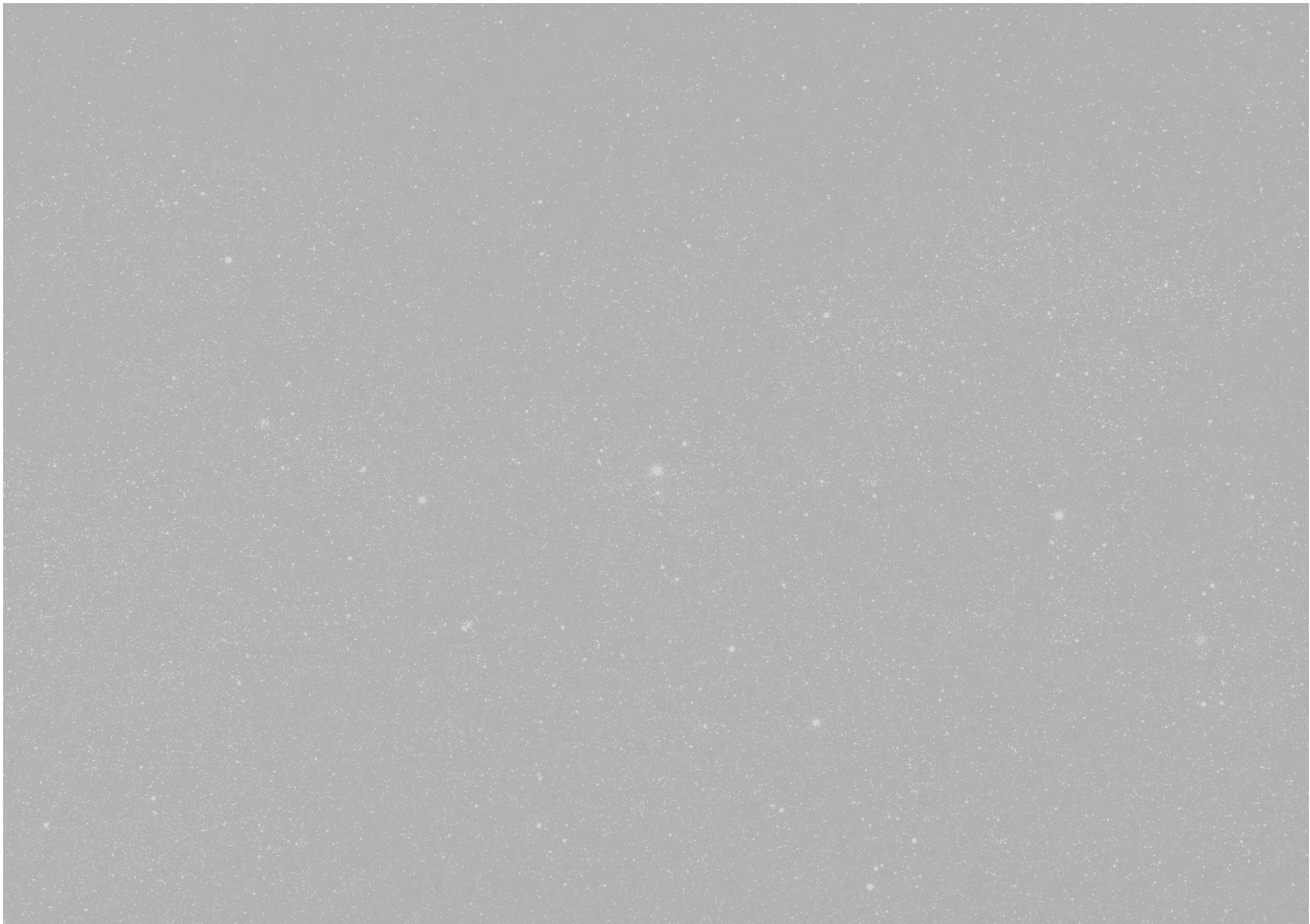


Fig. 6 Installation view, Foto Forum, Bolzano, 2024  
Fig. 7 Equipment, gelatin silver print, 50x60 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2021  
Fig. 8 Vega and Deneb, six gelatin silver prints, 30x40 cm each, ED 3+2 AP, 2022









In the previous pages:

Fig. 9 Tabernas Desert, 2022

Fig. 10 Schedar from Colle dell'Agnello, detail

Fig. 11 Schedar from Turin, detail

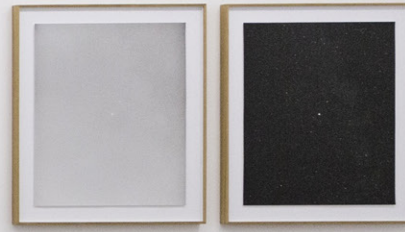
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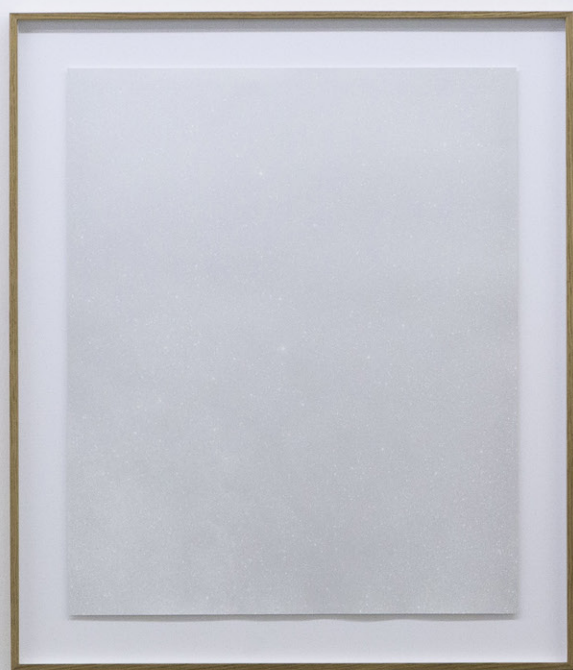
Fig. 13, 14 Installation view, Foto Forum, Bolzano, 2024

Fig. 15, 16 Installation view, 10 A.M. ART gallery, Milan, 2022



Fig. 12 Large Format Lens, gelatin silver print, 50x60 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2021











# Fräsen, The Unseen Design of Industrial Processing Tools, from 2014 till Today

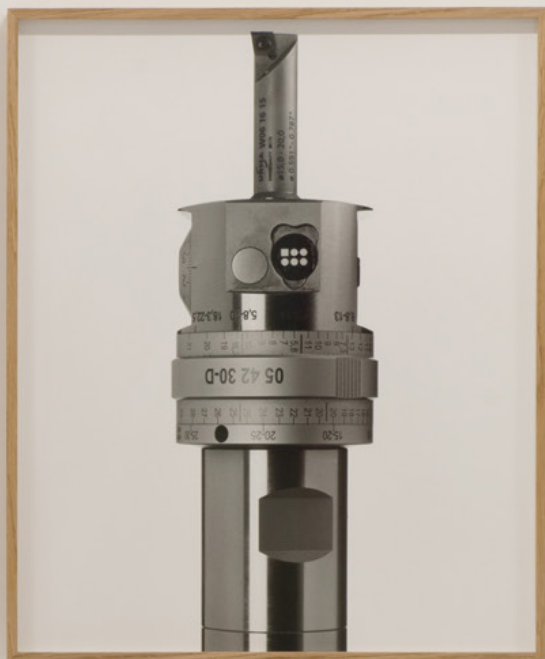
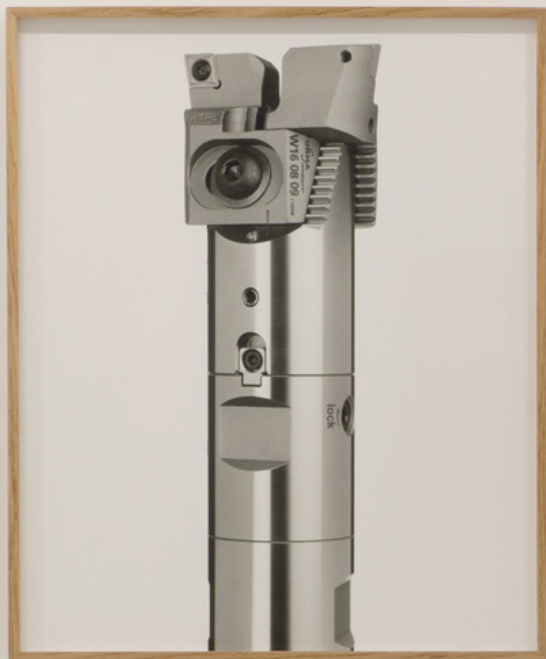
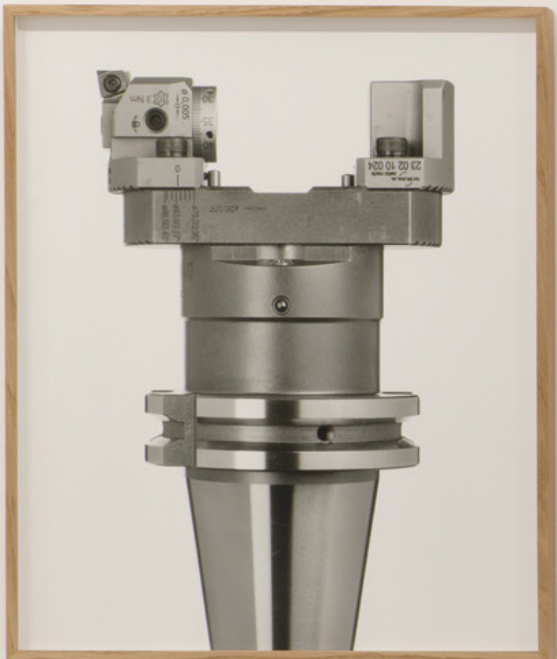
*Fräsen* - translated from German “milling” - is a photographic project started in Leipzig in 2014. The subjects of the photographs are small industrial tools that, when attached to a milling machine, engrave and shape materials such as metal, plastic, and wood. In the images, the milling cutters are depicted on a neutral background and removed from their original context. The photographs highlight the shapes of what we don't usually see: what we do see is, in fact, the cutters' trace in the things of everyday usage. The resulting images depict the shapes of objects originally designed to shape other materials. In 2016 the project was exhibited at the Fondazione 107 of Turin, a former industrial hangar, as an installation composed of eight slide projectors equipped with wide-angle lenses. The black and white slides, loaded into the projectors, show the tools enlarged within the exhibition space: the collection of industrial objects takes on the value of totems and possible architectures, something other than what they are. Referring to the aesthetic of Karl Blossfeldt's body of work, *Urformen der Kunst*, and Bernd and Hilla Becher's photographic ap-

proach, the project renders and arranges the cutters with detachment and analytical rigor. In 2019 Del Conte started a new series in collaboration with UrmaTools, a company based in the Swiss canton of Aargau that has specialized in high-precision boring systems since 1963. This new series presents modern CNC cutting tools whose purpose is to process the metal alloys used, particularly within the automotive and aerospace sectors. Part of the work was exhibited in Milan at the Basilica di San Celso in October 2020. The exhibition, curated by Angela Madesani, displays the tools in a new light. The intelligence and knowledge behind the cutters' design mirror the holiness of the space, creating a dialogue with the architecture of the Romanesque church.

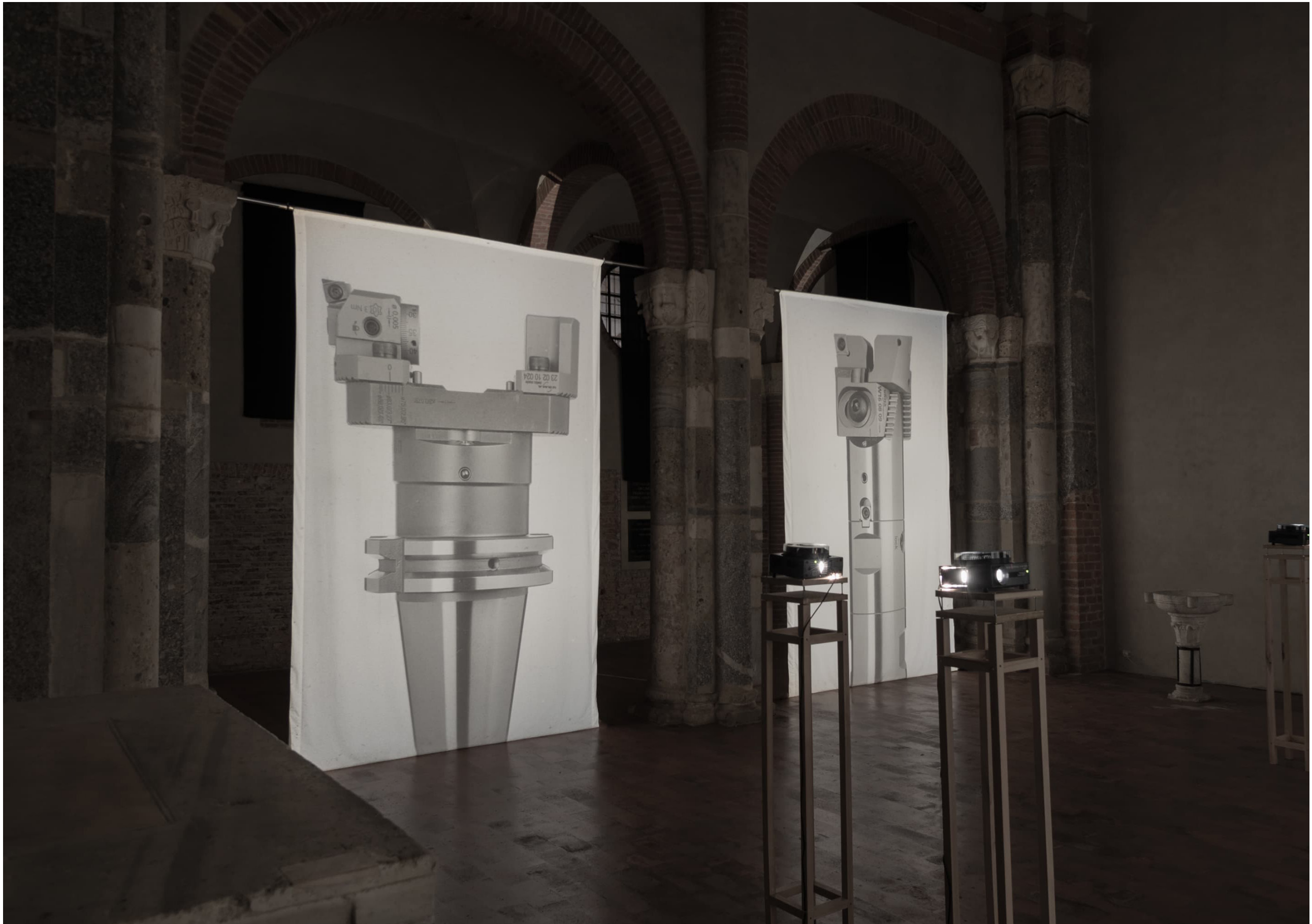


Fig. 1,2,3 Gelatin silver prints, 50x 60 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2020  
Fig. 4 Installation view, 10 A.M. ART gallery, Milan. 2022











05 42 30-D  
15:20 20:25 25:30  
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60  
5.8-D 18.3-ZZ  
8.8-13  
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In the previous pages:

[Fig. 5](#) Basilica di San Celso, Milan, 2020

[Fig. 6,7,8](#) Four slide projections, 400 x 280 cm each, Basilica di San Celso, Milan, 2020

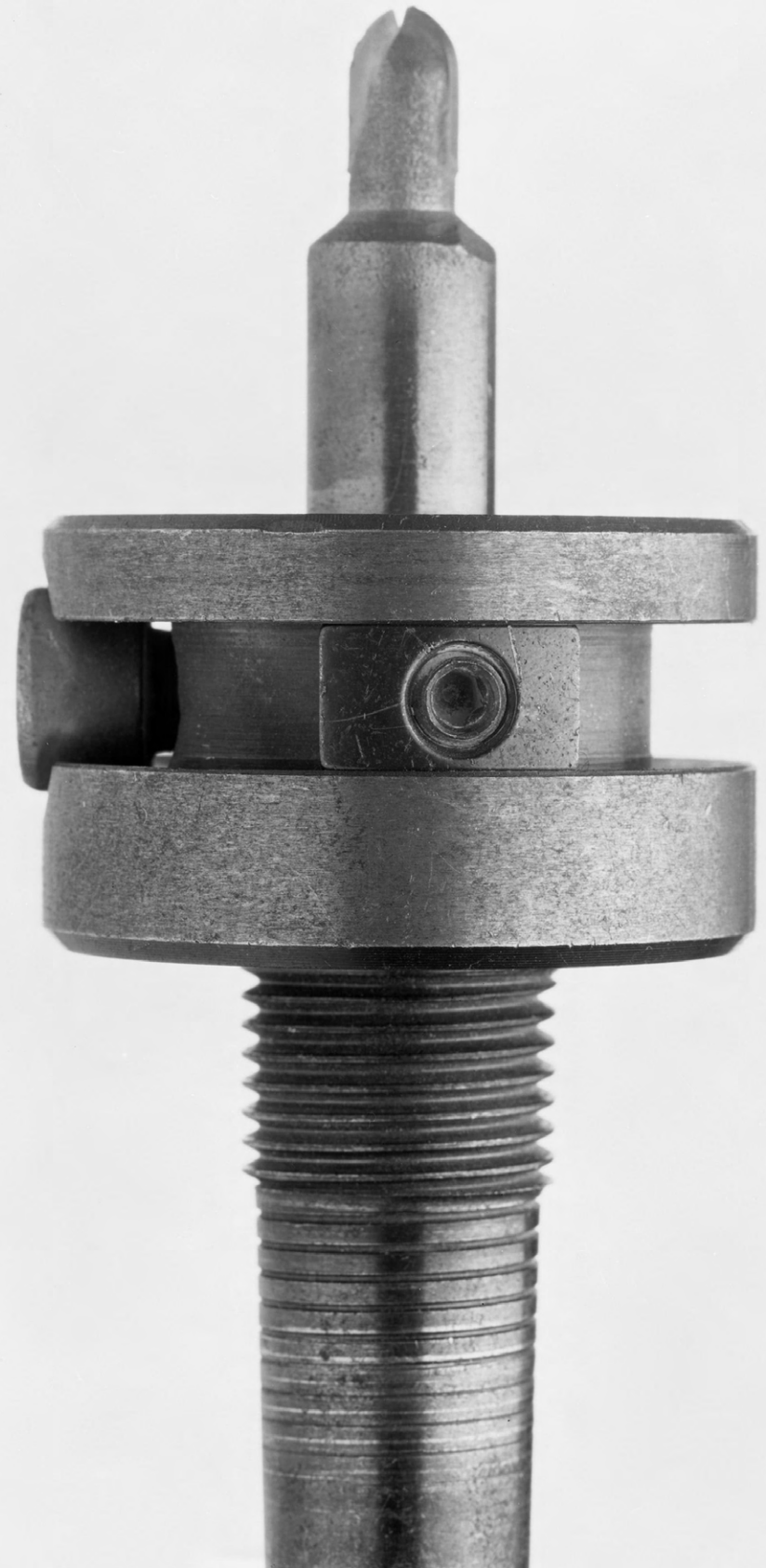


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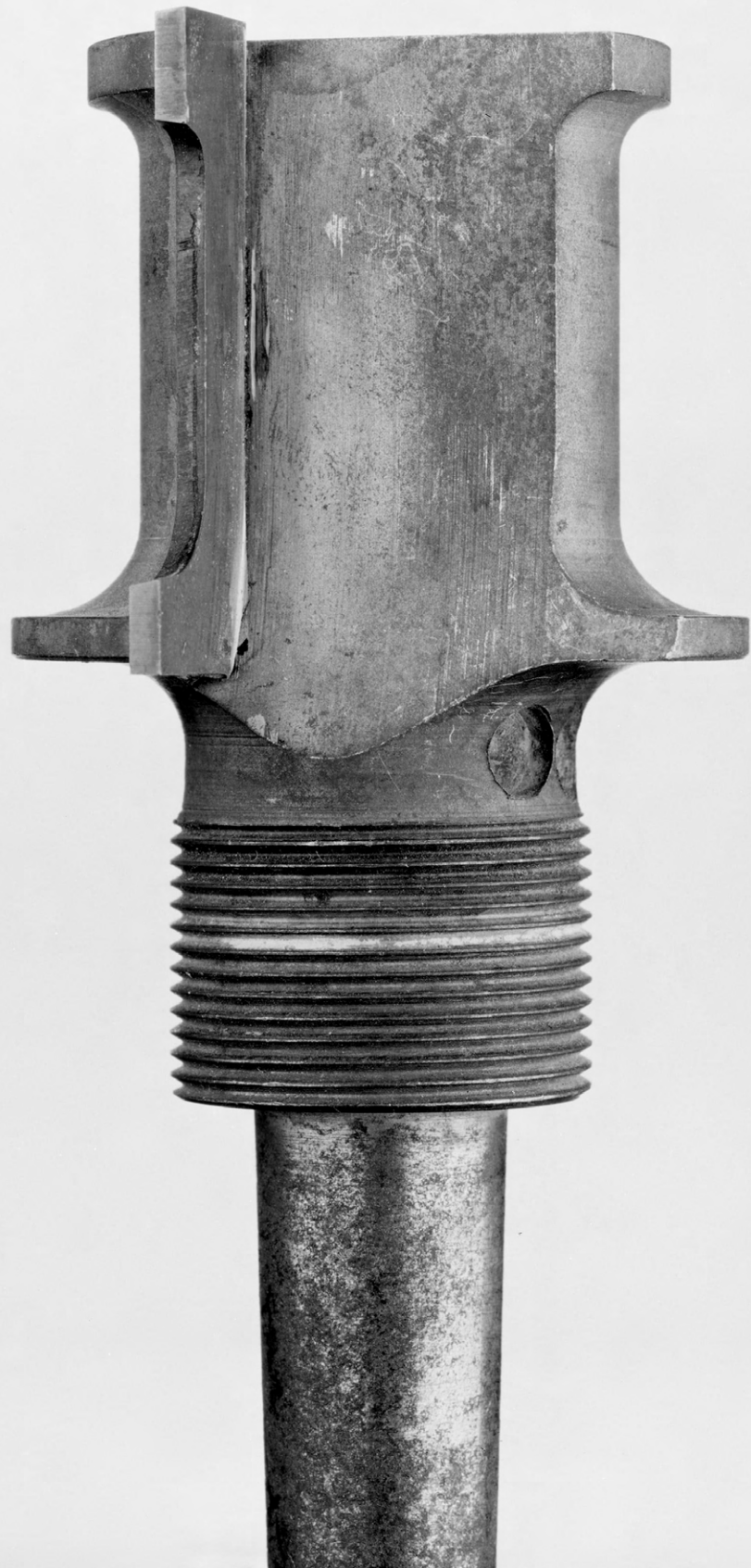
[Fig. 9](#) Basilica di San Celso, Milan

[Fig. 10,11,12,13](#) Gelatin silver prints, 50x60 cm, ED 3+2 AP, 2016

[Fig. 14,15](#) Eight slide projections, Fondazione 107, Turin, 2016











# Houses, Prefab Architectures in Japan, 2017



*Houses* is a photographic series made in Japan in 2017 during the fellowship program undertaken by the artist at the Centre for Contemporary Art CCA Kitakyushu. While deeply involved in studying the traditional Japanese building technique, which will lead to conceiving the series *Joining*, Francesco Del Conte is fascinated by the contemporary houses that compose the residential neighborhoods in which he lives. Manufactured homes, imported from the US, first appeared in the Japanese archipelago after WWII to solve the housing shortage.

The proliferation of this technology has led to an extreme and alienating standardization of the urban fabric, especially in the residential areas, composed today of mass-produced houses that recall a Western style. The series is formed by ten gelatin silver prints, representing a breakthrough for the artist because it is the first outdoor work. The photographs offer a repetition of the same subjects, nondescript locations, and yet very particular: deserted urban landscapes, residential areas that outline the city edges, and side roads. Street lamps, traffic lights, and rooftops fix the framing of images on the line between an enigmatic atmosphere and an objective approach.

Fig. 1 Untitled, detail, gelatin silver print, 2017

Fig. 2,3,4,5,6 Untitled, gelatin silver prints, variable dimensions, ED 5+2 AP, 2017













# Joining, The Traditional Japanese Building Technology, 2016



Inspired by a Japanese woodworking manual,<sup>1</sup> *Joining* investigates a traditional building technique that, over the centuries, has shaped Japanese architecture.

Of Chinese origins, the joinery technique reached Japan through Korea around the seventh century AD. However, the country's particular circumstances of geopolitical isolation led to the adaptation of this technology to indigenous architectural styles and its application to dwellings and religious constructions up until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Joinery is a set of skills developed and handed down from one generation to the next: the lines, the shapes, and the selection of the proper timber result from a deep knowledge that has reached high-quality standards. It is possible to count several hundred distinctly different joints, with some reserved for only one type of construction. Time plays a decisive role in this technique: on the one hand, joinery has very antique roots, but on the other, it has an unpredictable future since the method is slowly vanishing. The new Japanese generations are not interested in keeping the tradition alive, and new, faster, and less expensive Western building techniques have become popular. Today, there are about a hundred Mía-Daiku left, master carpenters who are experts in the ancient joinery technique and the only ones able to renovate the most important shrines and temples. It is a debated topic in Japan, and the government is trying to adopt solutions to avoid the risk of a future in which such a unique cultural heritage could be lost. The project started when the artist commissioned eight different types of joints from Toshiro Kobayashi's workshop, a carpenter

based in Imabari who still follows the traditional procedure. The joints were made by the master's disciple Funaki Rintaro: six faithfully reproduce the one published in the manual by Sumiyoshi and Matsui, and the other two (Kanawatsugi and Shihou sashi) are an original creation by the craftsman. In Japan, joints are classified according to their function, and the quality of the timber traditionally depends on the relevance of the building, and it is worth noting that for *Joining*, a three-hundred-year-old Japanese Hinoki cypress was used. Del Conte then photographed the crafted joints with a medium format analog camera from a 45-degree angle. The pictures are revealed on black and white transparencies lit by two light-box tables, also made with the joinery technique. There is also a printed version of the work, composed of 24x30 cm gelatin silver prints. Each joint is matched by a grid of images that, just like a carpentry handbook, shows the step-by-step assembly of the pieces. The first slide on the top left of the grids displays the components of each joint, and those following show its operation.

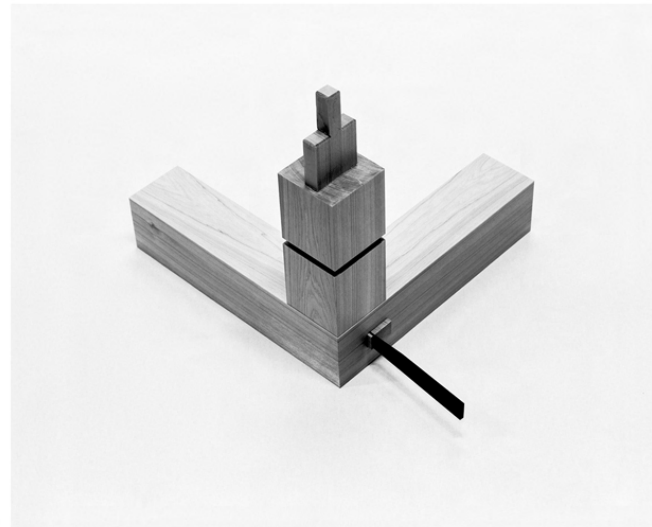
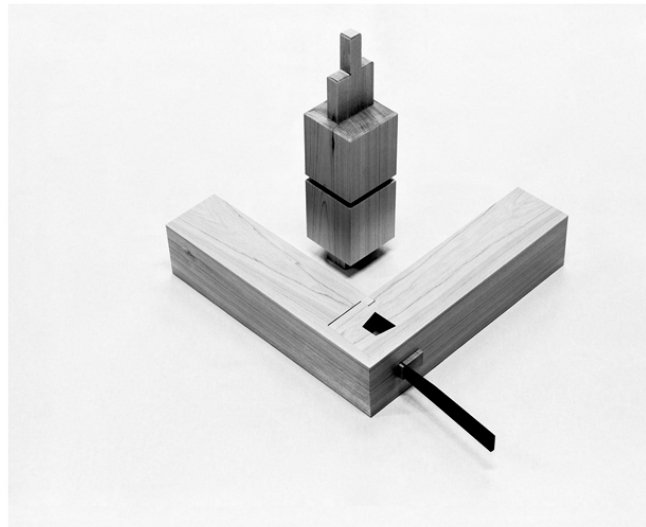
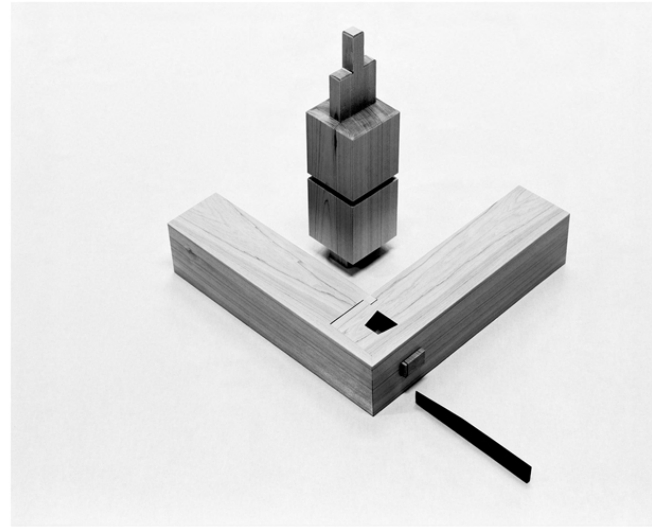
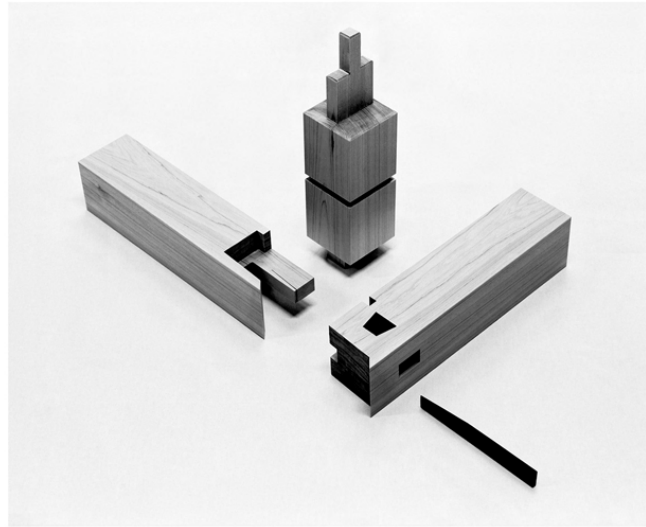
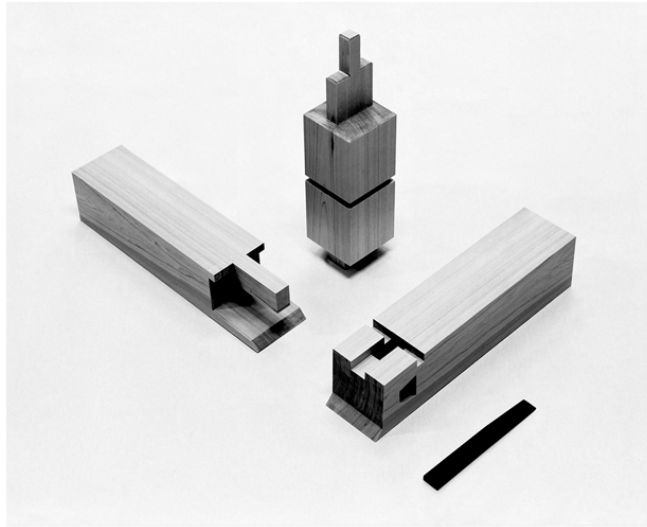
The emphasis lies on design pieces that, despite their particular and aesthetically fascinating shapes, are usually not visible because they disappear within the construction lines. Their nature is functional and choral because each piece contributes to the building's harmony. Instead, the artist aims to reveal each piece's shape and restore its uniqueness. Del Conte looks at architecture as a trace of human presence, and even if the project rules man out on purpose, it intends to propose a reflection on it. The camera's subject is not only something tangible and physical; it is, above all, an aesthetic quality and a form of knowledge; it is a fragment of history that breathes within the monochromatic wooden shapes.

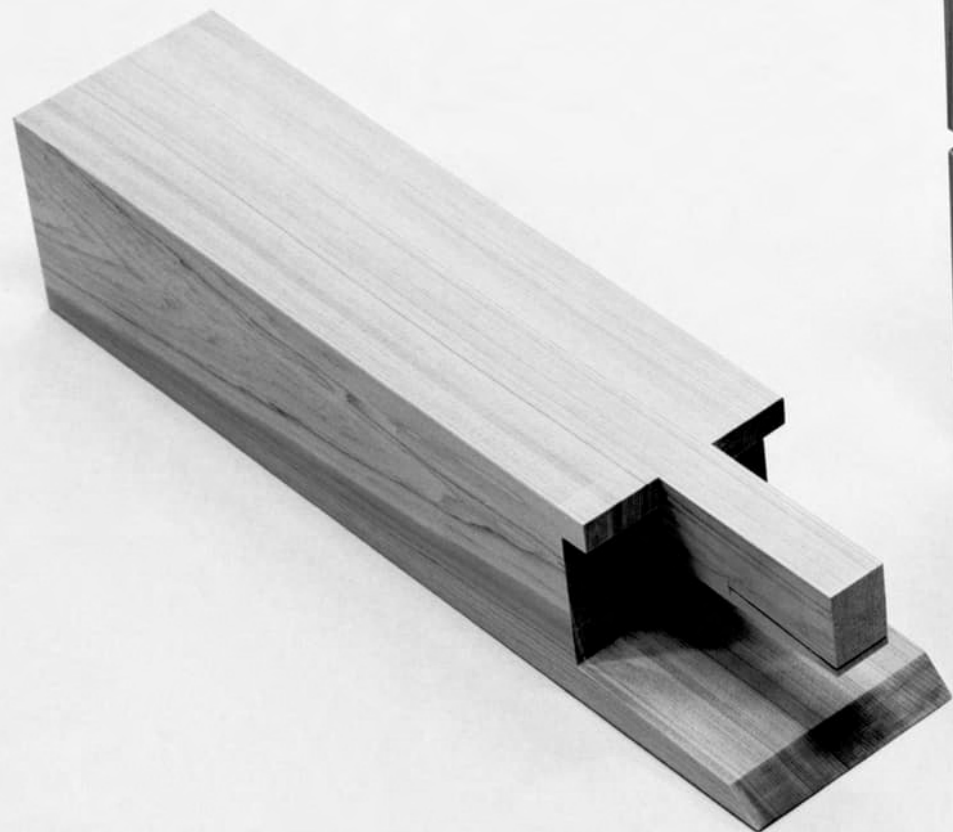
<sup>1</sup> Torashichi Sumiyoshi & Gengo Matsui, Wood joints in classical Japanese architecture (Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd. 1989)

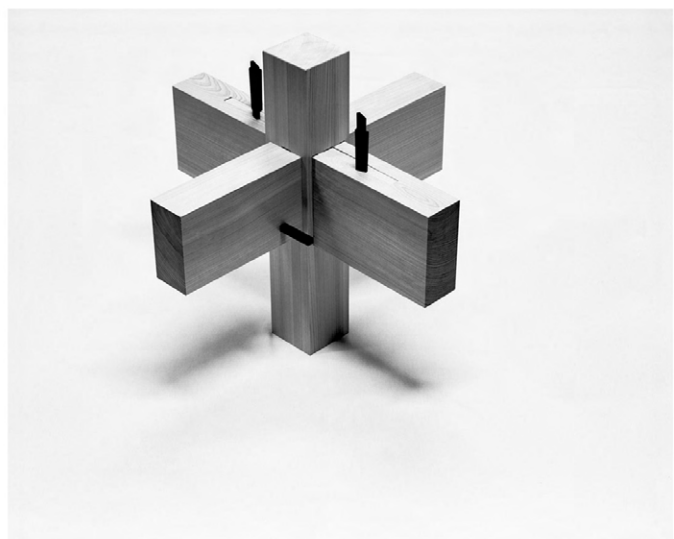
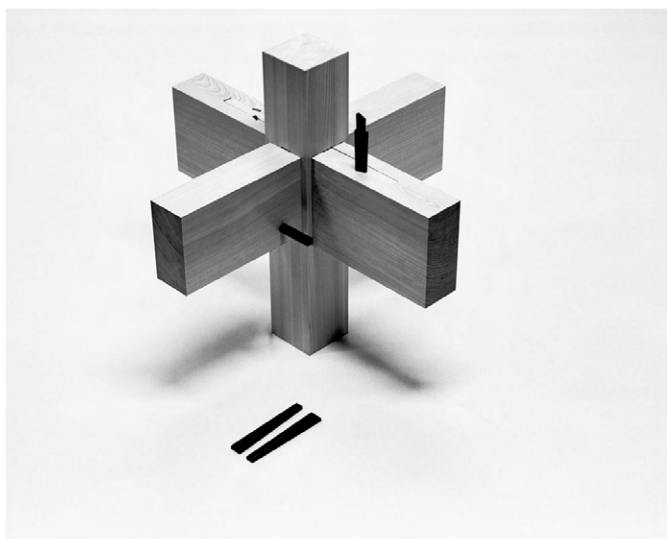
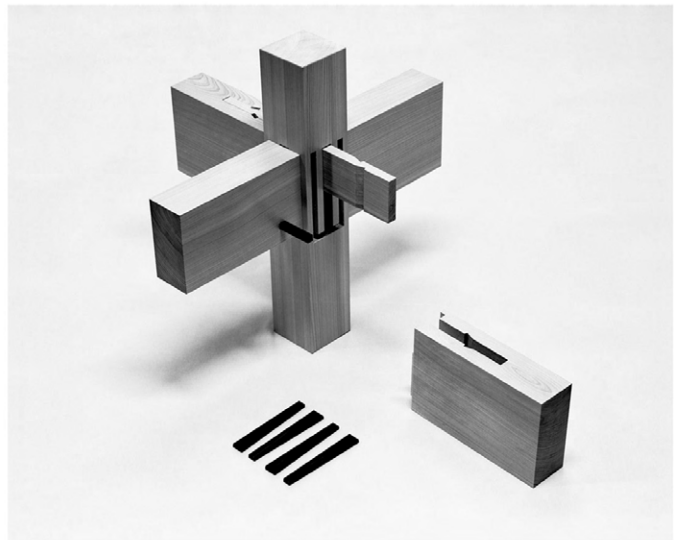
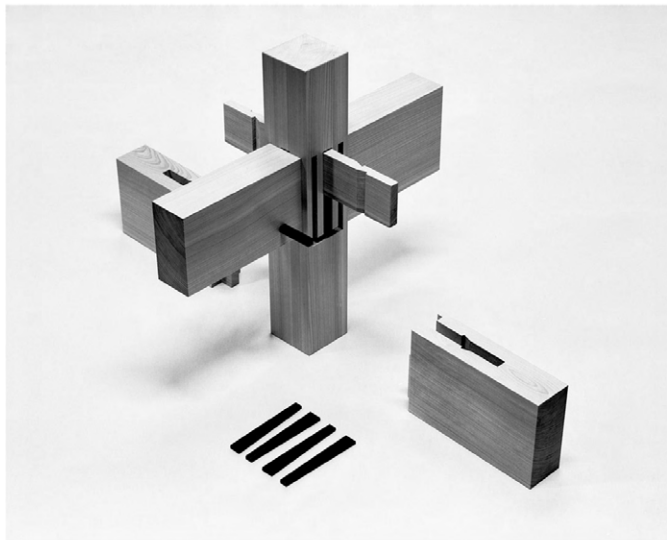
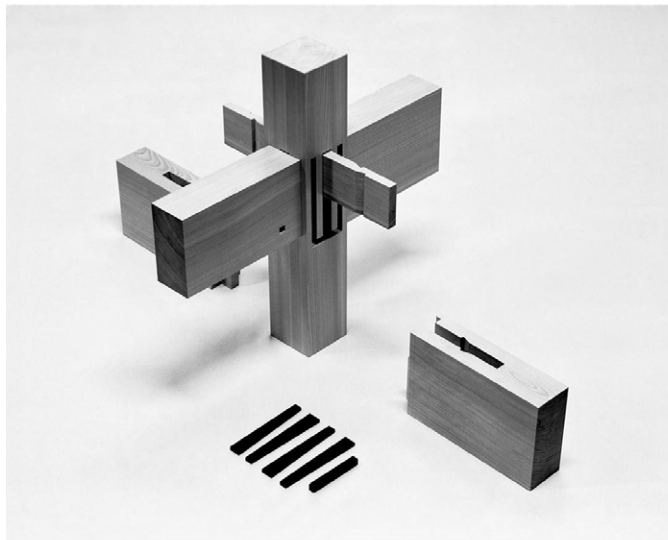
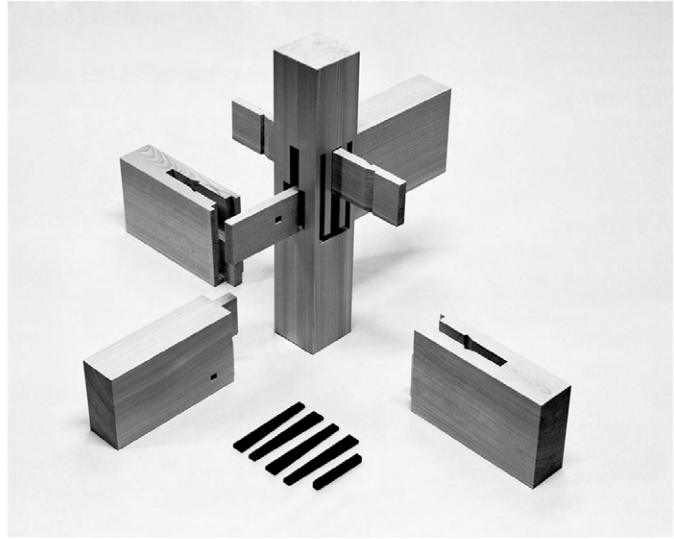
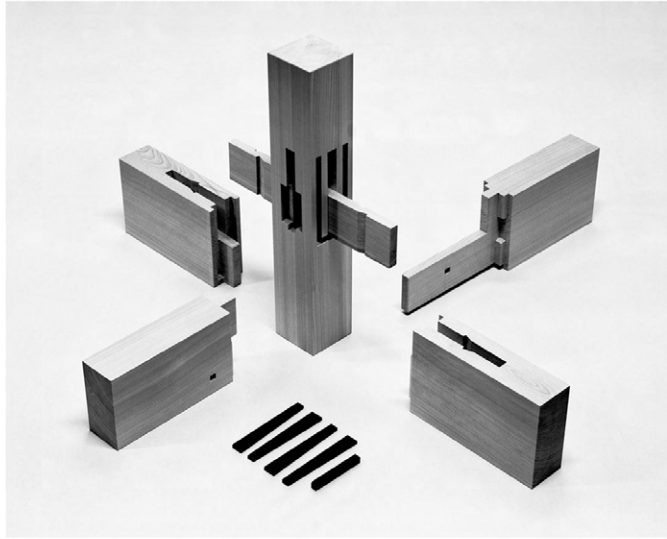
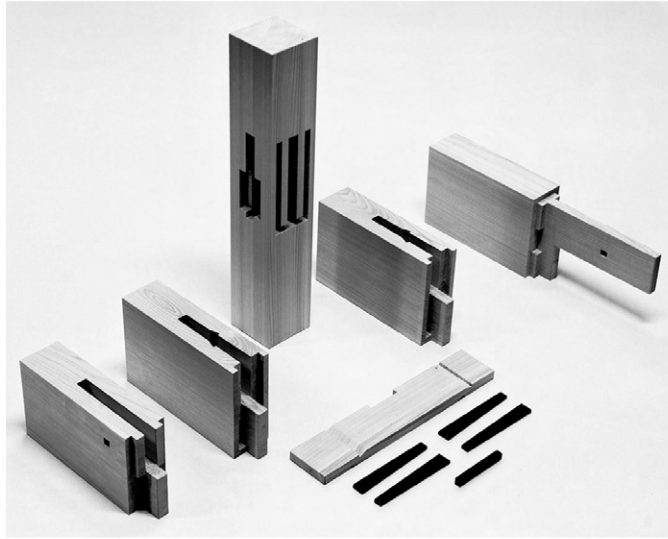
Fig. 1 Kanawatsugi, gelatin silver print, 24x30 cm, ED 5+2 AP, 2017

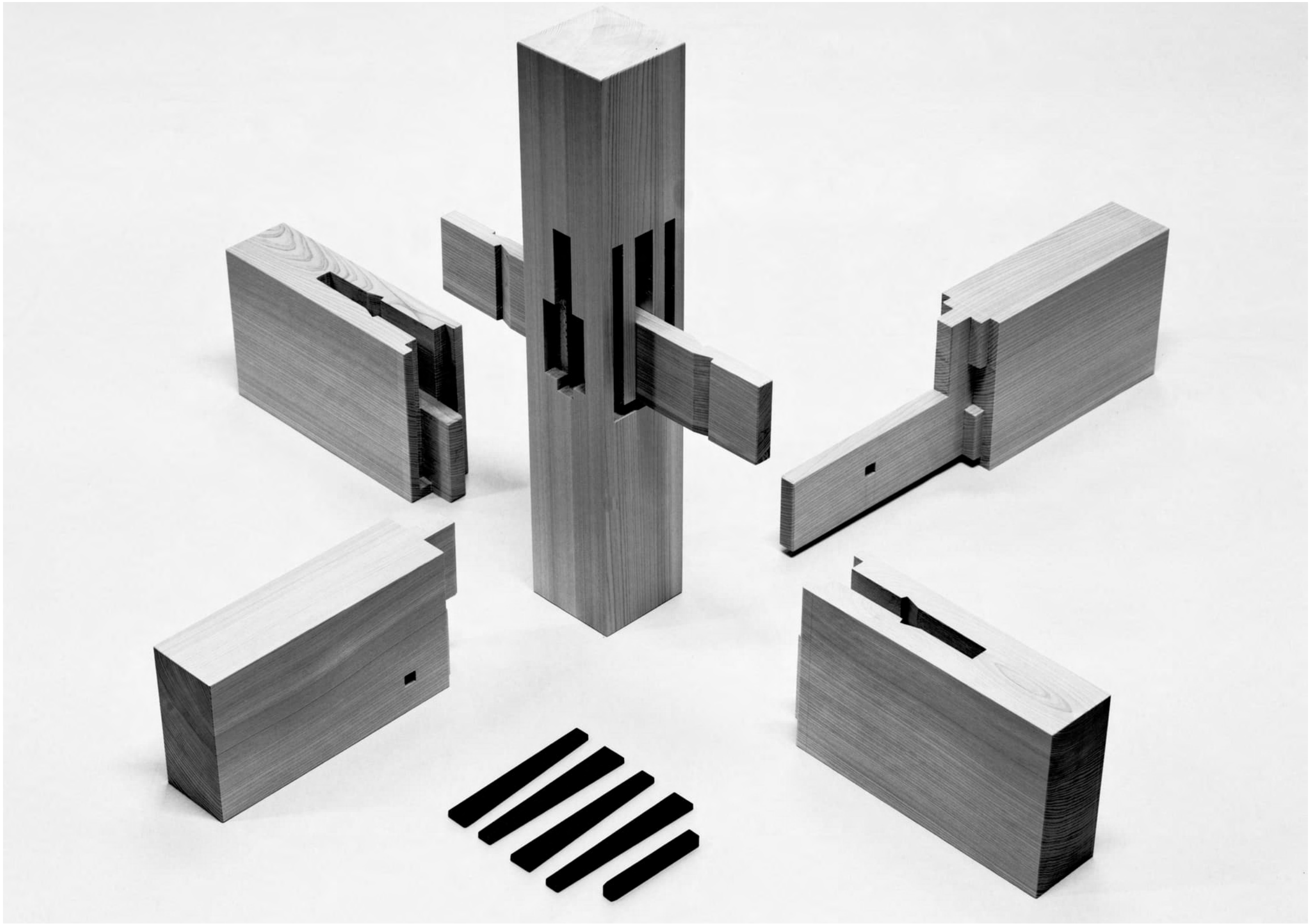
Fig. 2 Toshiro Kobayashi's Workshop, Imabari, 2016







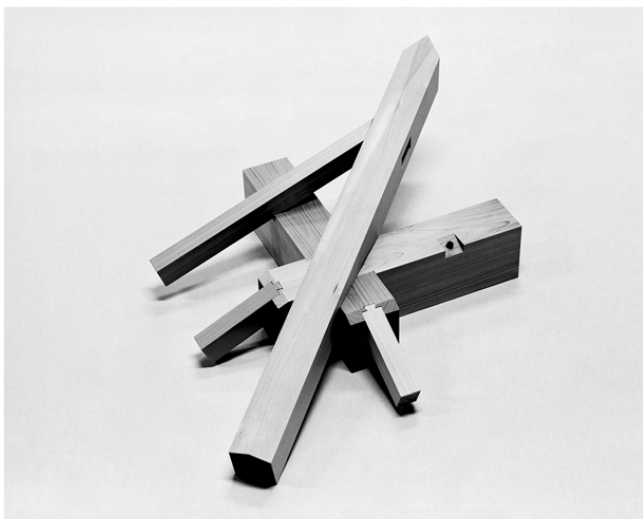
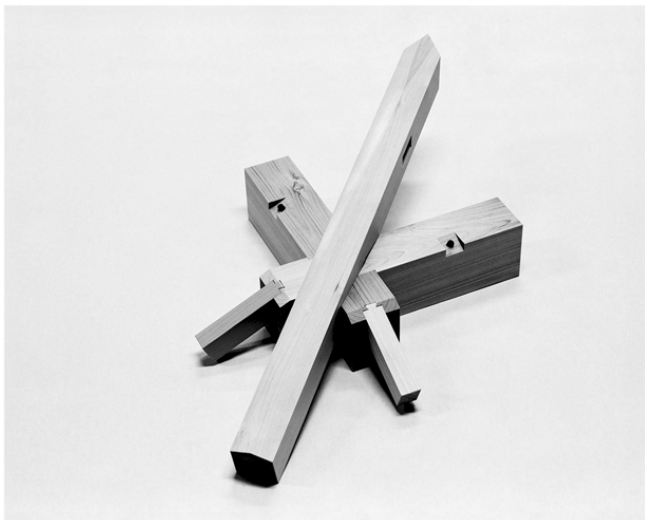
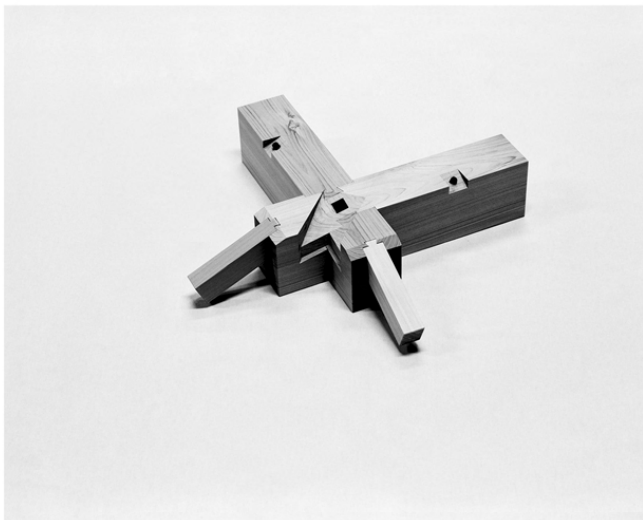
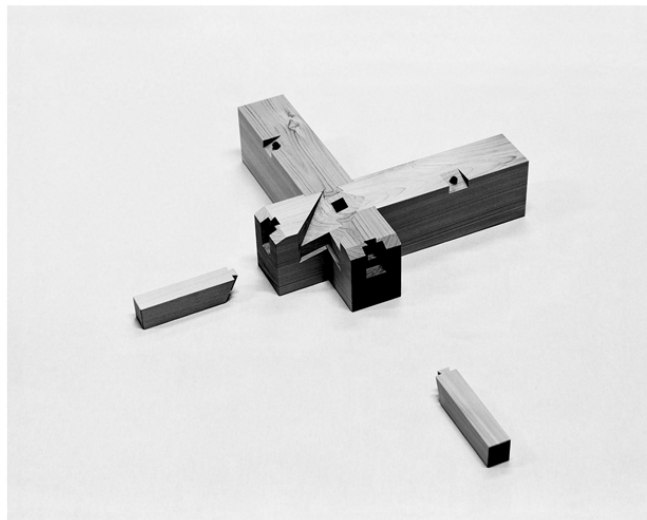
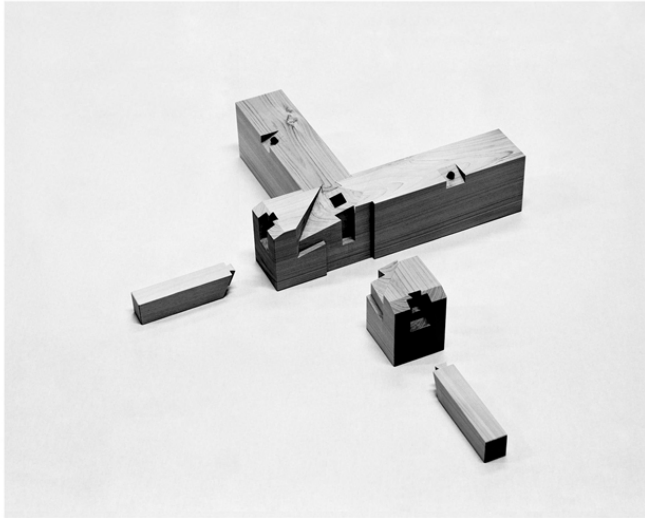
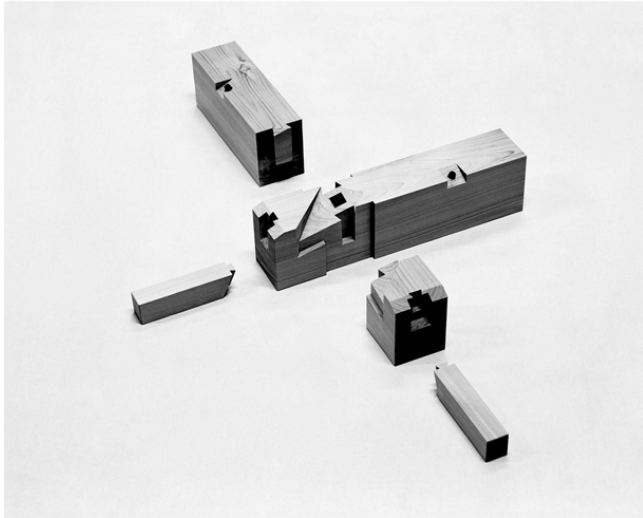
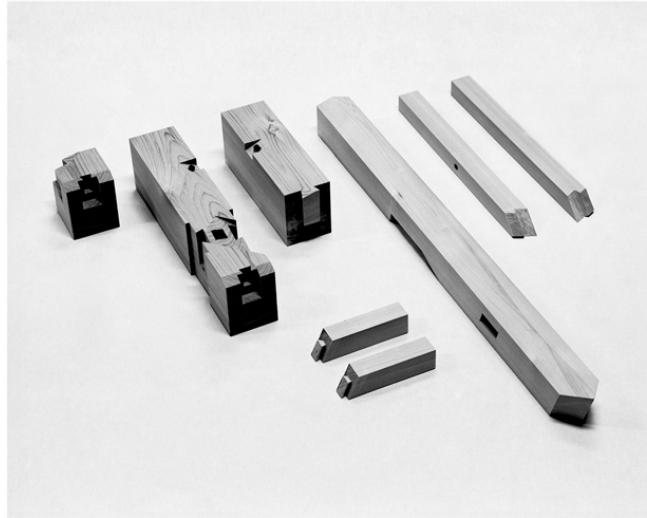


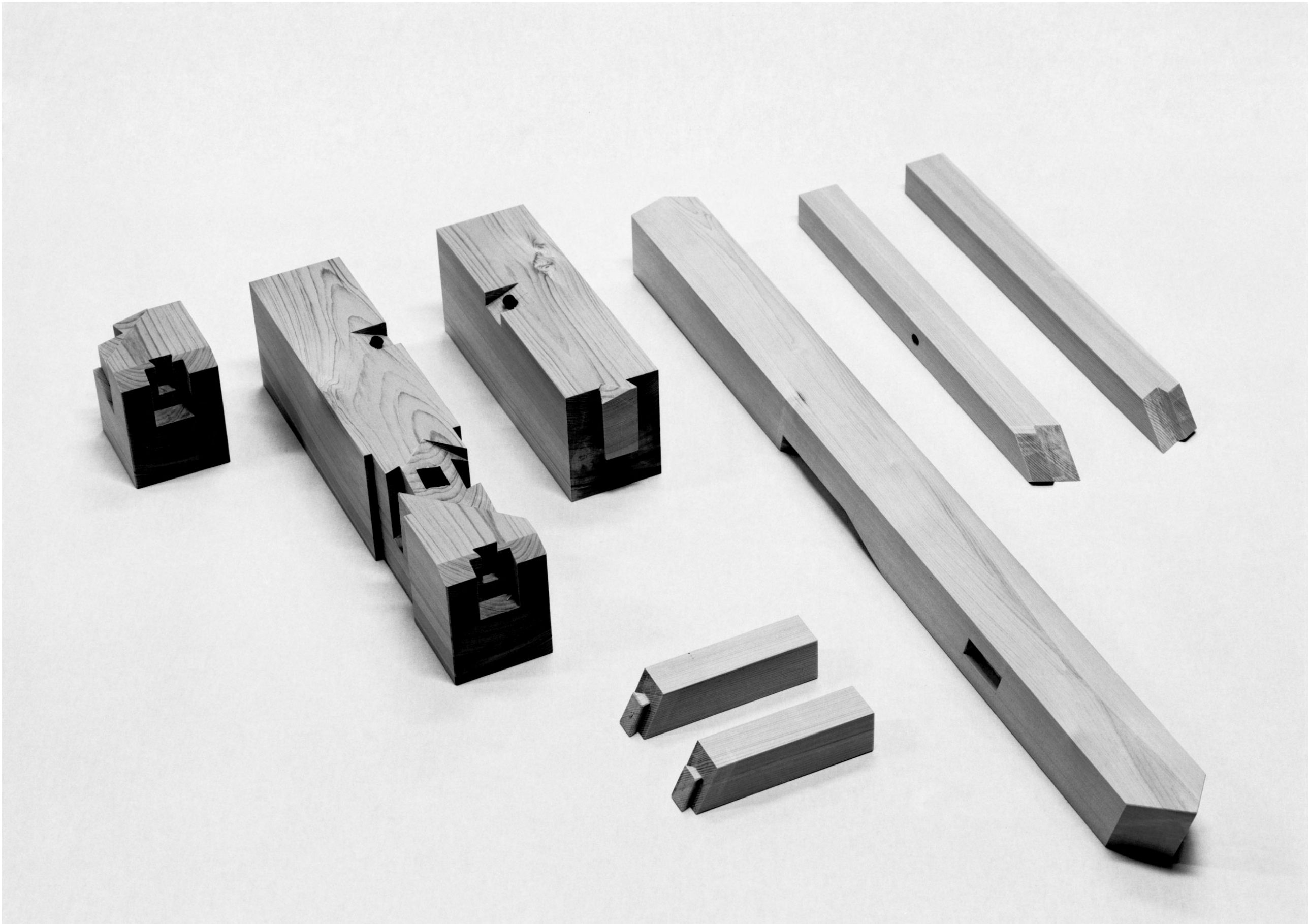




- Fig. 3 Sumitome hozo sashi, five gelatin silver prints, 24x30 cm each, ED 5+2 AP, 2017  
Fig. 4 Sumitome hozo sashi, detail  
Fig. 5 Shihou sashi, eight gelatin silver prints, 24x30 cm each, ED 5+2 AP, 2017  
Fig. 6 Shihou sashi, detail  
Fig. 7, 8 Framed B/W slides on light-box tables, Serie Inversa # 4, Turin, 2017  
Fig. 9 Making of Joining, CCA Kitakyushu, 2016  
Fig. 10 Yosemite no sumi, eight gelatin silver prints, 24x30 cm each, ED 5+2 AP, 2017  
Fig. 11 Yosemite no sumi, detail







# Archeologia del Quotidiano, Simple Everyday Objects, 2009-2011



*Archeologia del Quotidiano* is Del Conte's first approach to photography. For about two years, he has been portraying everyday objects such as Moka pots, heaters, ladles, graters, bottles, glasses, ashtrays, and cups. It is crucial to the artist because, in this period, he developed his interest in analog photography and film processing. Most of these compositions are illuminated by the natural light coming from the window next to the subjects. Through this series, made with a medium format analog camera, we enjoy the familiar design of the objects of our daily life. Each object has been photographed several times, with similar or different light conditions, isolated or next to other utensils. This methodology gave birth to a series of non-descriptive and essential photographs, characteristics visible in some future projects of the artist.

Fig. 1 Grattugia, Bottiglia e Posacenere, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

In the next pages:

Fig. 2 Grattugia, Caffettiera e Shaker, detail, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

Fig. 3,4,5 Caloriferi, gelatin silver prints, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

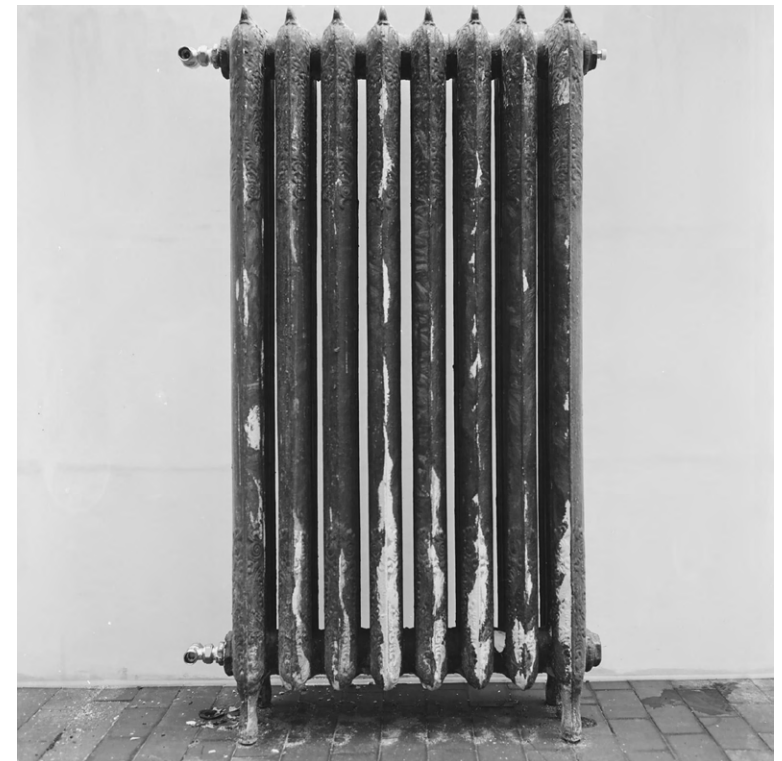
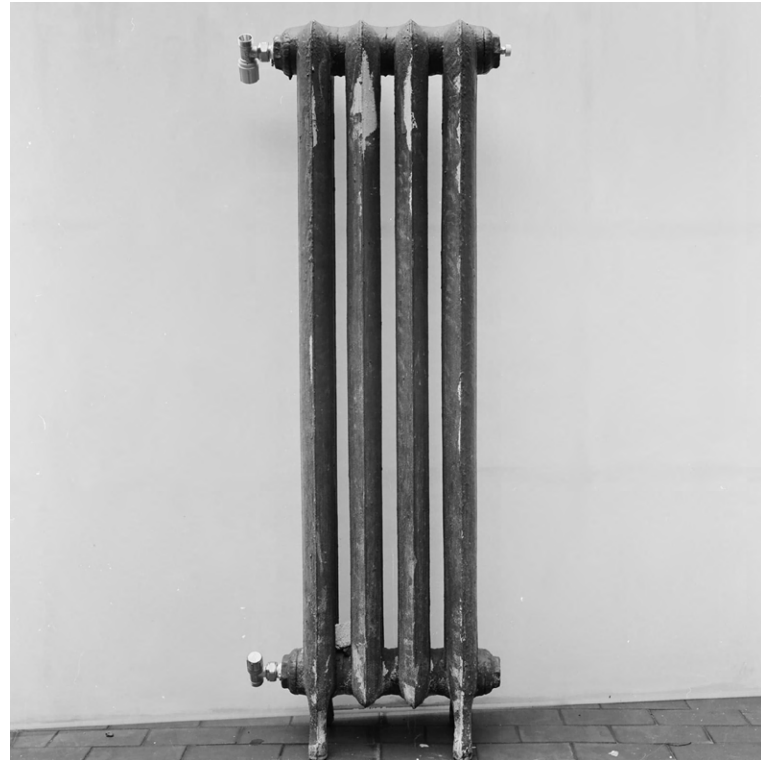
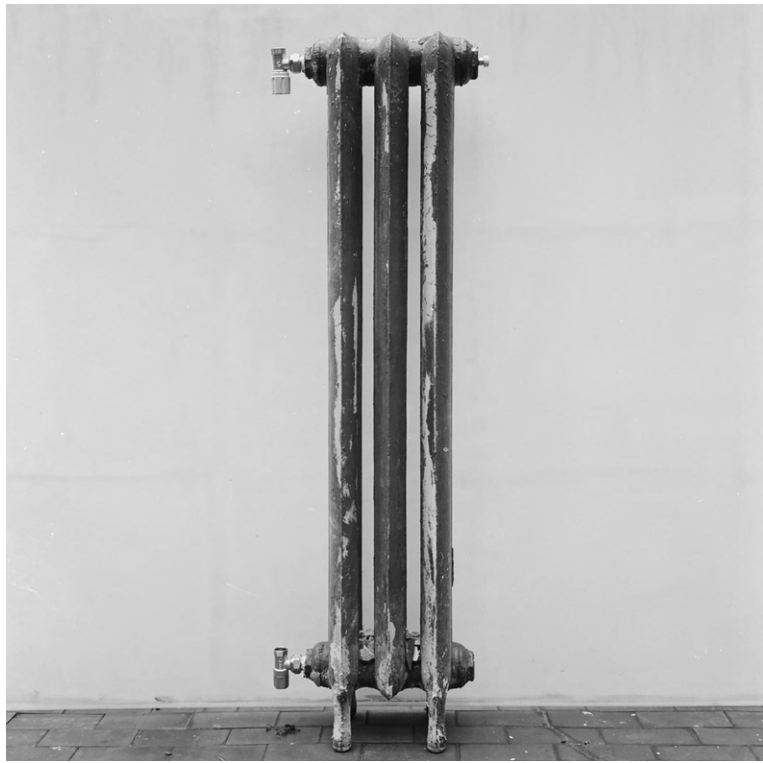
Fig. 6 Grattugia, Posacenere e Mestolo, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

Fig. 7 Bottiglia, Posacenere e Mestolo, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

Fig. 8 Grattugia, Cavatappi e Mestolo, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11

Fig. 9 Grattugia, Posacenere e Mestolo, gelatin silver print, 80x80 cm, 2009-11









# CV

Francesco Del Conte was born in Milan on June 1, 1988.

## Education

MA in Photography at the LUCA School of Arts, Brussels, 2013  
BA in Printmaking at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts, Turin, 2011

## Contacts

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Website: [www.francescodelconte.it](http://www.francescodelconte.it)  
Phone: +39 3287076130

## Residencies

Premio San Fedele, Milan, 2018  
CCA Kitakyushu Research Program, Kitakyushu, 2016-17  
Banchina Molino, Mestre, 2013

## Publications and Articles

Maybe Magazine #2, Publication with Kalamari Klub, 2022  
Tutte Quelle Cose, interview with Angela Madesani, 2022  
Parola d'Artista, interview with Gabriele Landi, 2022  
Hortus Conclusus, Torino: Edizioni 107, 2019  
Fotografia e Tassonomia, Artribune, Issue #49, May-June 2019  
Sguardi sul Futuro, Milano: Ancora Editore, 2019  
La Città, Milano: Silvana Editore, 2018  
Serie Inversa # 4, Diogene Project, 2017  
CCA Kitakyushu, exhibition catalogue, 2017  
Passi Erratici, exhibition catalogue, 2014  
Arte e Laguna, exhibition catalogue, 2012

## Prizes and Grants

One-Year Research Grant, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 2023-24  
Premio Rigamonti, 1st place, 2018  
Premio San Fedele, 2nd place, 2018  
Movin'Up, Grant to sustain Italian artists abroad, 2017  
Movin'Up, Grant to sustain Italian artists abroad, 2016  
CCA Kitakyushu Fellowship, CCA Committee, 2016-17  
Arte e Laguna International prize, finalist, 2012  
Print About Me, printmaking international prize, 2011

## Talks and Teaching

Articulate Week, Research Class, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 2024  
Privégesprek, Violet Art Space, Antwerp, 2024  
Framing Colour, Symposium at FOMU Photo Museum, Antwerp, 2023  
Il Cuore Avventuroso # 2, Paolo Pessarelli Studio, Milan, 2022  
DIP Talks #7, LUCA School of Arts, Brussels, 2019  
Serie Inversa #4, Diogene Project, Turin, 2017

## Collections

Artphilein Foundation  
Fondazione 107  
Private Collections

## Selected Solo Exhibitions

Achromatic Variances, V/MSP Gallery, Brussels, 2025  
Fräsen, Archivio Negroni, Milan, 2024  
Skyglow, Foto Forum, Bolzano, 2024  
Fräsen, Basilica di San Celso, Milan, 2020  
WopArt Fair, Heillandi Gallery, Lugano, 2018  
Fräsen, Fondazione 107, Turin, 2016  
The Virtual Landscape Project, Recyclart, Brussels, 2013  
Under Water, C1.02 Project Space, Brussels, 2013

## Selected Group Exhibitions

Moving the Photogram, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 2024  
Cosmologie, Associazione 21, Lodi, 2024  
When space becomes a place for action and thought, 10 A.M. ART gallery, Milan, 2022  
Orientarsi con le Stelle, Museo della Città, Rimini, 2021  
Hortus Conclusus, Fondazione 107, Turin, 2019  
Sguardi sul Futuro, Centro Culturale San Fedele, Milan, 2019  
La Città, Centro Culturale San Fedele, Milan, 2018  
Serie Inversa #4, Diogene, Turin, 2017  
Research Program Exhibition, CCA Kitakyushu, Kitakyushu, 2017  
Quotidiana 16, Centro Culturale Altinate, Padova, 2016  
7su7, Moitre Gallery, Turin, 2015  
Passi Erratici, Fondazione Paraloup, Cuneo, 2015  
Passi Erratici, Forte di Exilles, Exilles, 2014  
Passi Erratici, Museo della Montagna, Turin, 2014  
7su7, Banchina Molino, Mestre, 2013  
Graduation Show, WOLKE, Brussels, 2013  
Class Show, Galerie Sint Lukas, Brussels, 2013  
Arte e Laguna International Prize, Venice, 2012  
Print About Me, Printmaking Prize, Turin, 2011  
The third floor: Free Speech Zone, IUC, Turin, 2011  
6x3, Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti, Turin, 2011  
Rimanenze, Ohne Titel Lab, Turin, 2010