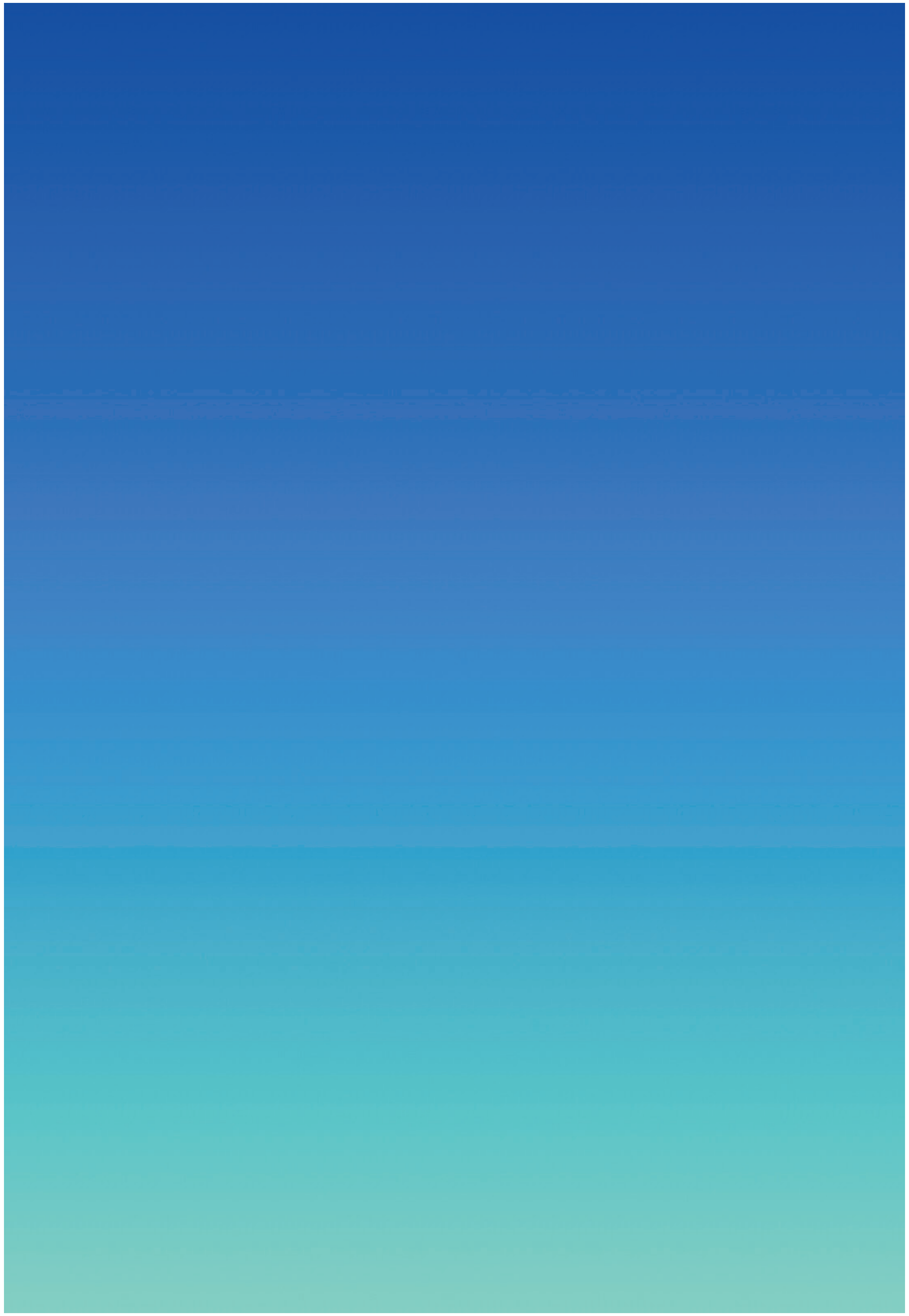


The Chromatic Illusion within the Photographic Universe, Ongoing

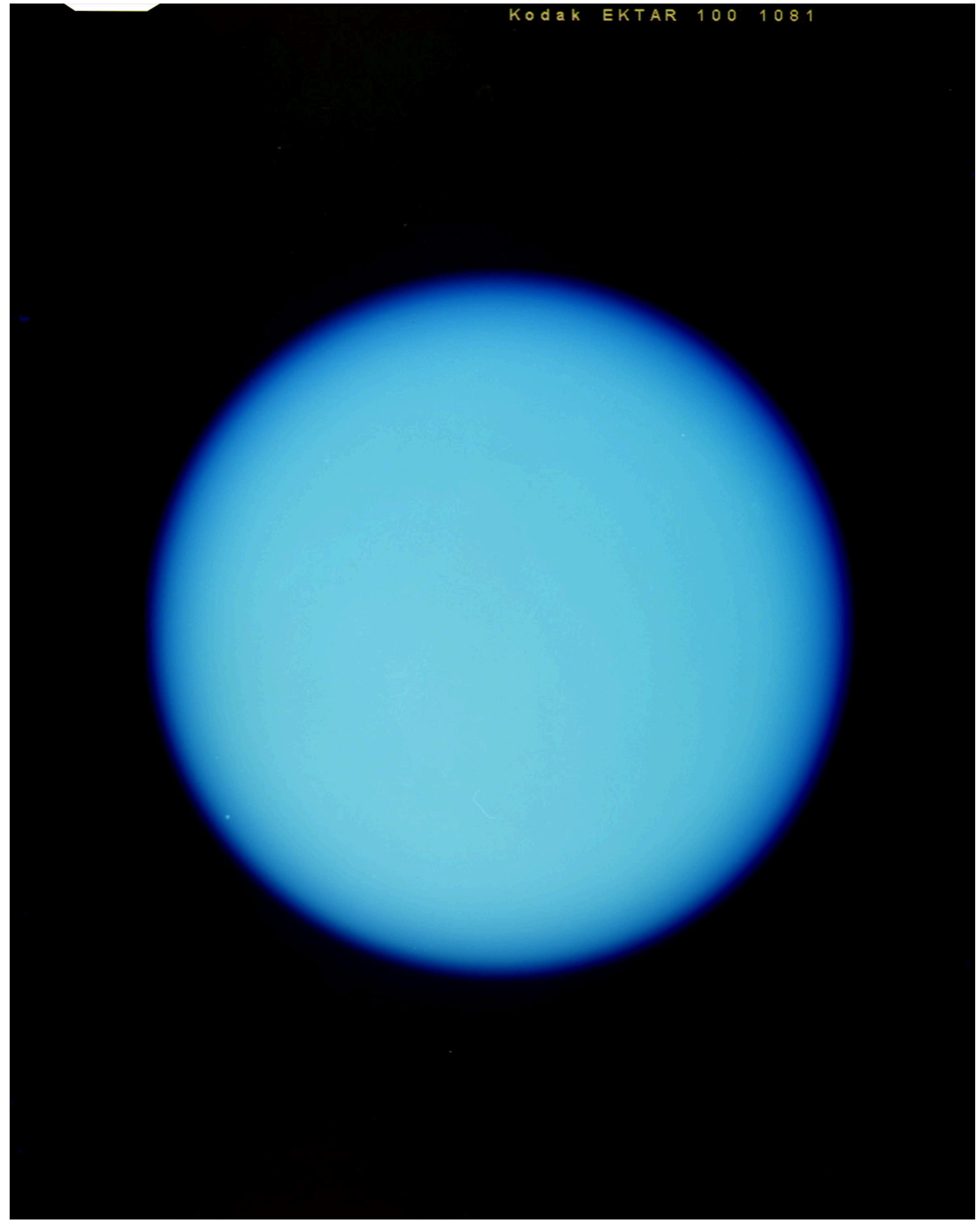
The Chromatic Illusion within the Photographic Universe is a practice-based research project developed within the Thinking Tools research group of the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts. On the one hand, Del Conte's interest focuses on unveiling the hidden impact technology has on color rendering. On the other, the research delves into crucial questions regarding photographic representation, exploring, for instance, whether the cultural stratifications of a geographic area determine how visual technologies decode colors. Furthermore, it examines what remains of the chromatic heritage left by past technologies, prompting inquiry into whether it's possible to talk about an extinct color palette when a certain film is discontinued. Starting from the realization that color is always artificially produced by photographic means, at the core of the research is a series of experiments that reference those carried out in the 1660s by Isaac Newton with sunlight and prisms.

In collaboration with a rainbow, produced in his studio with a diffraction grating and an artificial light source, Del Conte uses the basic elements of photography — electromagnetic energy and time — to test how different photosensitive materials interpret colors. The first work produced as part of this long-term study is called *Black and White Rainbows*, and it was presented during the Brussels Photo Festival 2025 as a wall installation composed of 60 gelatin silver prints. The artist used five distinct black-and-white films to capture twelve segments of the artificial rainbow. Rendering the vibrant hues of the colorful phenomenon in grayscale seems counterintuitive. Yet, this process echoes the historical essence of black-and-white photography, that is translating the endless visible colors into shades of gray. The installation is methodically arranged: the prints corresponding to the violets and blues occupy the left, greens and yellows span the center, and oranges and reds are on the right. Each column corresponds to the same portion of the spectrum while each row shows the unique chromatic response of a specific film. The rainbow colors are thus translated into varying shades of gray according to the spectral sensitivity of each emulsion. The darkest prints show the films' inability to capture certain wavelengths — revealing photography's inherent color blindness — while the brightest ones show the point of maximum sensitivity.

Similarly, the series *Gradients* records more extended portions of the visible spectrum using color films from different historical periods and produced by various companies, such as Kodak and Fujifilm — the two giants of the photographic industry that until a few years ago determined the color rendition of photographic and cinematographic production. The work also examines the extent to which a given culture influences the development of color technologies, posing questions such as why Japanese and Western films interpret colors differently. Finally, the video piece *From Infrared to Ultraviolet* shows the journey of a digital camera crossing the same rainbow used for making the prints. The resulting footage transitions smoothly through the entire spectrum, from infrared to ultraviolet. By emphasizing the subjective nature of color perception, the piece demonstrates how the technical specifications of cameras and monitors significantly shape our experience of color.

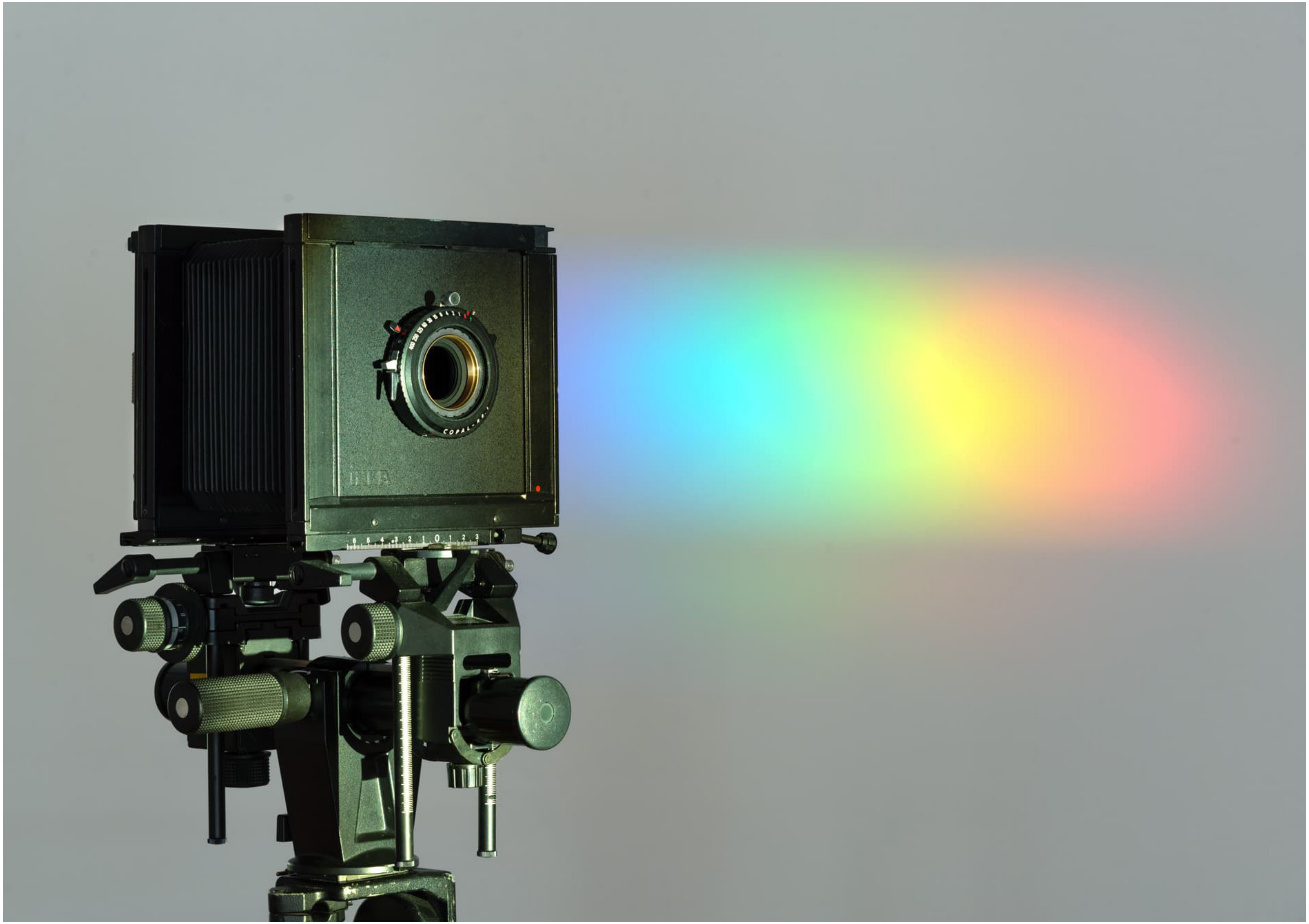
Through this research, the artist discloses the distinct genetic fingerprints of different films while probing the biases technology imposes on our representation of reality. Additionally, as the three works present both an abstract and a scientific/analytical component, Del Conte delves into the intricacies of photographic representation, highlighting the intrinsic paradoxes of the medium.

On the left:
Fig. 1 Gradient #1



In the next pages:
Fig. 4 The Artist Studio
Fig. 5 Large Format Camera with Rainbow

Fig.2,3 The Blue of the Sky on Kodak Ektar, 2021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Ten Hues of the Rainbow Recorded with Two Different Color Negative Films

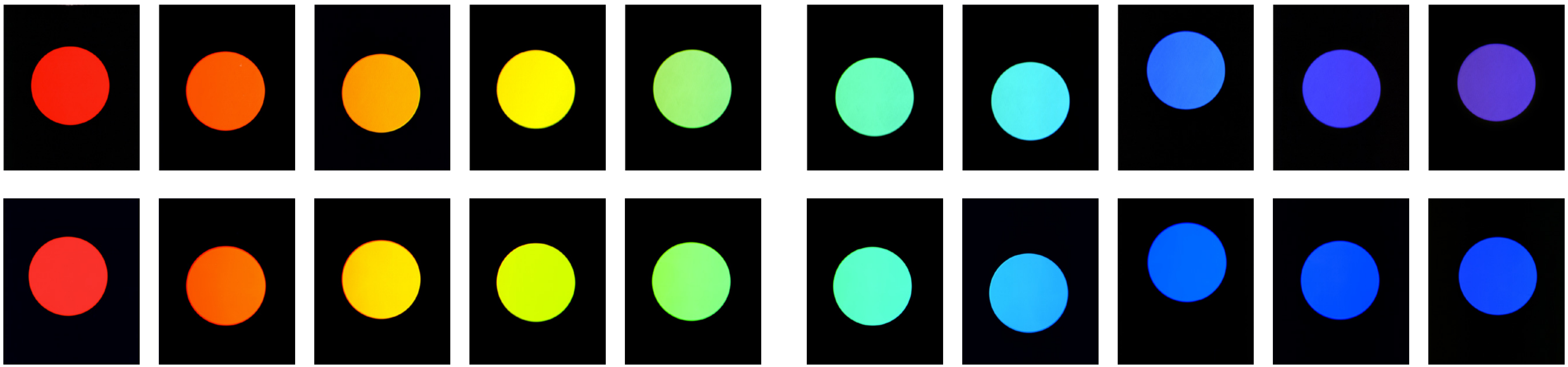

Fig.6 This test was produced in Turin during 2022, entirely by chemical means, except for the digitalization of the negatives necessary to this presentation

In the previous page:
Fig. 7 Ten 4x5 Color Negative Films Placed on a Light-Box Table, 2022

On the right:
Fig. 8 Large Format Camera, Diffraction Grating and Light Source

In the previous page:
Fig. 9, Installation view, V/MSP Gallery, Brussels, 2025

On the right:
Fig. 10 Installation view, V/MSP Gallery, Brussels, 2025