

Diego Tonus
Professional Secrets
Sculpture
Each panel: 21×29.7 cm
Inlaid wood of various essences
2024-Ongoing

Professional Secrets is a sculptural series embedding secrets. Each sculpture in the series is shaped like a contract page, based on a professional secret shared with the artist. It is the result of a negotiation in which the disclosed elements are decided in collaboration with the person involved. In this work, the object, the title, and the secret message shared with the artist form a contract acting as a Confidential Disclosure Agreement.

According to the shared secret, the sculptures are shaped using encoding techniques and encryption algorithms to embed messages using coded languages, ensuring that the story will not be deciphered in the future. The creation of these objects and their patterns are therefore influenced by methods of recognizing visual codes, not only as decorative elements but also as contributors to defining these sculptures as active objects.

The result is an ongoing series of hybrid objects conceived as unique pieces, displaying professional secrets that are exposed within the work without being revealed. The use of wooden essences contributes to creating a hybrid object camouflaged within the context in which the work will be displayed.

The work culminates in a data bank of concealed secrets, in which the artist collects, processes, and transforms data/secrets, acting as an organization/institution and storing them according to a personal method of archiving as part of a secrecy agreement, ensuring that these stories remain private.



Professional Secret #030 **ChatGPT (After Ellsworth Kelly)**, 2025
I Can Recognize Patterns in Data, but I Don't Truly Understand Them Like Humans Do!

4/4 panels. Materials: Riegel Maple, Oak wood veneers

ディエーゴ・トナス
Professional Secrets
木画彫刻
各シート: 21 × 29.7 cm
様々な種類の木材象嵌
2024年～継続中

Professional Secretsは、秘密を内包した彫刻シリーズです。各作品は、契約書のページを模した形をしており、作家と共有された職業上の秘密である Professional Secretsをもとに制作されています。公開される要素は、秘密を共有してくれた相手との協議によって決定され、その結果として作品が生まれます。本作では、作品とタイトル、そして作家と共有された秘密のメッセージが、機密保持契約 (Confidential Disclosure Agreement) として機能する構成となっています。

各木画彫刻は、共有された秘密に基づき、符号化技法や暗号化アルゴリズムを用いて、暗号言語でメッセージを埋め込み、将来的にその内容が解読されることがないように作られます。したがって、これらのオブジェクトとそのパターンの創造は、視覚的コードの認識方法に影響され、装飾的要素としてだけではなく、これらの彫刻を能動的なオブジェクトとして定義する要素としても機能しています。

その結果として生まれるのは、作品上に表れつつも明かされることのない「職業上の秘密」を表現した、ユニークでハイブリッドな現在継続中の彫刻シリーズです。木材の持つ性質を活かすことで、作品展示の文脈にカモフラージュされた「ハイブリッドなオブジェクト」が生まれます。

この作品は、隠された秘密のデータバンクとして集約され、アーティストは組織や機関のように機能しながら、秘密やデータを収集・処理・変換し、秘密保持契約の一部として、独自のアーカイブ方法に基づいて保管されます。これにより、これらの物語が私的なものとして守られ続けることが保証されています。



Professional Secret #022 **Takuya Tsutsumi**, Kyoto 2025
Insisting, Persisting, Resisting

8/8 panels. Materials: White Sycamore, Zelkova wood veneers and Urushi Laquer



Professional Secret #023 **Satoru Takahashi**, Osaka 2025
How to Hear the Unheard? How to See the Unseen?
Strategies to Build New Memories and to Coexist Before the Next Earthquake.

5/5 panels. Materials: White Sycamore Indigo Tokushima, Angsana Red, Hinoki Cypress wood veneers



Professional Secret #029 **Yosuke Amemiya**, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan 2025
Happiness is the New Luxury

9/9 panels. Materials: Tilia Japonica, Padouk wood veneers



Professional Secret #014 **Junko Yamaoka**, Kyoto 2025
Taking Care or The Rule of the Three Eyes

4/4 panels. Materials: Ebony, Zelkova, Beech and Castor Aralia wood veneers



Professional Secret #012 **Austin Park**, Kyoto 2025
Playing Between Mastery and Make-Believe

6/9 panels. Materials: Wenge, Beech, Zelkova, White Sycamore, Padouk and Ebony wood veneers



Professional Secret #019 **Ishikawa Ichiro**, Hakone 2025
How to Be Authentic Without Rules?

2/12 panels. Materials: Japanese Ash, Ebony wood veneers



Cover image: Exhibition view, Villa Kamogawa Library, May 2025 Photo DT Studio

Diego Tonus: the Art of Trust

Initially conveyed through traditional media (especially TV), certainly dramatically accelerated by social media, frequently appearing in the pages of self-fiction and auto-fiction books, the confession, the revelation of a private situation, of a personal story, even of a secret, is the emotional and narrative drug of our time. It became the dopamine accelerator even in the domain of politics.

So, if it is not surprising that a contemporary artist conceived a series of works on secrets and confessions, it is certainly more remarkable that he based them not on the disclosure of a number of secrets entrusted to him, but on their visual restitution in abstract and encrypted forms.

I will tell you a secret: Diego Tonus is certainly not the first artist in post-modern art to engage with secrets as a constitutive part of an artwork. Mentioning by heart and in chronological order I should remember Alighiero Boetti designing a minimalist lamp (supposedly) lighting up for 11 seconds only every year (*Lampada annuale*, 1966). Soon after he conceived a poster representing a number of colleagues and friends, each accompanied by a series of symbols. The artist supposedly entrusted a notary of the meaning of each symbol. Yet, no decryption of these codes has been found so far (*Manifesta*, 1967). After all, Boetti himself once proclaimed that “If things are not secret, they water down”.

All through 1969, Robert Barry conceived a series of works with invisible materials (radio waves, inert gases, radiations, telepathy) diffused through indoor or outdoor environments, or proclaimed, announced or allegedly transmitted them to/through people, as a way to test the limits of human imagination and physical perception,

questioning the very anthropological vision of the world. Especially one work of the same year (*A work submitted to Project Class, Nova Scotia...*, better known as the “Askeveld Piece”), consisted in inviting a group of students of the college to agree upon an idea. Yet, once the idea was revealed or leaked, the work would cease to exist. Like a sort of Dracula, art loses its power once exposed to sunlight.

And, again, we can’t forget to mention Vito Acconci announcing through a newspaper ad that he would reveal his most intimate secrets to the strangers he would meet at a New York pier [*Untitled (project for Pier 17)*, 1971], or Hreinn Fridfinnsson who collected secrets from voluntary senders and finally crated a painting with the shredded papers of such secrets (*I collect personal secrets*, 1972-2015).

It is surely not a coincidence that these works emerged in a cultural context that aimed to surpass the autonomy of the artwork professed by modernist theory and a certain idealism of early minimal art. A narrative substance, even if reduced to a minimum, lies behind many works of post-minimal art, especially of a conceptual character. These concise narrative plots would function as triggers for an imaginative action that might “live in your head”, as Harald Szeemann notoriously proclaimed. Moreover, some of the works mentioned above and many others in those days, were formalized through certificates, instructions, charts, letters: dry and (quasi) non-retinal forms of communication depicting what, in a famous text on conceptual art, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh defined as an “aesthetic of administration”.

Such a relation to the administrative realm lies behind the series of works recently conceived by Diego Tonus as *Professional Secrets*.

Continuing his interest for the world of archive, bureaucracy and law, that motivated some of his previous projects, this latest series looks at secrets and confessions, not so much from a personal and emotional point of view, but as related to the context of professionalism and labor. Rather than carrying solely a personal and intimate content, they eventually preserve a knowledge of collective interest.

In our digital world the “aesthetic of administration” took different appearance and secrets have often the look of passwords, codes, encrypted languages. On the other hand, in the shared knowledge of the digital culture, professional secrets are valuable assets impossible to summarize in codes. Or, at least, not for artists..

Developed through a period of residence in Japan, these works are, in fact, the result of professional secrets shared with the artist by a number of different professional figures he encountered during his trips. On a series of A4 rectangular sheets of paper traced with grids, Tonus invented different systems of visual codes, each representing and “translating” the text of the secret. Applying these motives on a variety of wood panels through an inlay technique, these abstract motifs – each different –are the encrypted codes untranslatable to the audience. They remain a shared piece of information between the artist and his collaborator, hidden under elegant forms. So, while minimal and post-minimal art reduced to a minimum their retinal impact and often outsourced the production of the art work to other hands, Tonus adopts sophisticated formal solutions through a technique patiently learnt and personally executed. These techniques derive from Japanese traditions that the artist observed and adopted with absolute care.

Such aesthetic attention might be read as the physical restitution of the dedication used to hold the secret that has been shared. At the same time, this aesthetic aspect is the Troy Horse to give the dry bureaucratic subject a formal appeal that would attract the viewer as much as the collector. It is the tool to obtain or preserve the trust. The decorative aspect is not created per se but rather as a sort of decoy to attract and activate the spectator’s gaze. At the same time, the titles of each series serve as questions for the viewer, offering a hint of a secret that will never be fully revealed.

Like in some of the examples mentioned above, here it is equally crucial the form of trust and belief that is established between the different actors of the relationship that is at the core of the artwork: the artist, the secret’s holder, the collector, the spectator. In Tonus’ case, “care” is at the center of the relationship established through and in the artwork, where the artist plays the role of a careful and dedicated keeper: of a secret, a professional capacity, a technique. If these works play with the format of a legal patent, a secret code, or an encrypted formula, never have administration nor bureaucracy been so good looking.

Luca Cerizza

Diego Tonus. **Professional Secrets**
Curated by Luca Cerizza

Dates: Fri. 14. Nov. – Sun. 16. Nov. 2025, 10:00-19:00
Venue: Goethe-Institut Villa Kamogawa

On occasion of the public program Art Collaboration Kyoto 2025 (ACK) co-curated by Martin Germann and Kimura Kokoro

Leaflet design by Jan van der Kleijn

Special Thanks to the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Mondriaan Fund – the public fund for visual art and cultural heritage; STROOM Den Haag; Higashiyama Artists Placement Service (HAPS Kyoto) - 遠藤水城 Mizuki Endo and 藏原藍子 Aiko Kurahara; for facilitating the introduction to 堤浅吉漆店 Tsutsumi Asakichi Urushi; 森工芸 Mori Kougei Tokushima

With the support of:



ディエーゴ・トヌス ‘Professional Secrets’ 展
キュレーション：ルカ・チェリッツァ

会期：2025年11月14日（金）–16日（日）10:00-19:00
会場：ゲーテ・インスティトゥート・ヴィラ鴨川

マーティン・ゲルマンと木村こころがキュレーションするArt Collaboration Kyoto 2025（ACK）パブリックプログラムとして

リーフレットデザイン：ヤン・ファン・デル・クレイン

Special Thanks:
駐日オランダ王国大使館（東京）、モンドリアン財団（オランダ）、STROOM Den Haag（オランダ）、一般社団法人HAPS（遠藤水城氏、藏原藍子氏）、堤浅吉漆店（京都）、森工芸（徳島）

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