

What We Tell Ourselves

In "What We Tell Ourselves," the narrative explores the introspective journey artists undergo in understanding themselves and their art. It emphasizes that the stories individuals create about their identities and their work do not encapsulate their true essence or the essence of their creations. These narratives act as a smokescreen, clouding the reality of what is significant and what constitutes genuine contribution. The chapter argues that the value lies in the work itself—the art that is produced and its reception—rather than the stories we construct around our identity and the process of creation.

The author suggests that every person, including each member of an audience, possesses a unique perspective, and attempting to boil down experiences or artistic efforts to simple, universally understood concepts is futile. With billions of data points in the world, humans can only capture and interpret a fraction, leading to a limited and possibly misleading understanding marked by the stories we tell ourselves. These narratives, according to the chapter, not only limit our perception of reality but also constrain the self's potential and reduce truth to fit within the bounds of these self-created stories.

Artists are thus encouraged to continuously let go of the narratives they cling to and instead, place their faith in the inherent curiosity and energy that drives their creative journey. The chapter posits that art represents a convergence of the universe, the artist's individual essence, and the mysterious yet disciplined process of bringing an idea into tangible form. Even when this confluence leads to contradictions or into realms that appear irreconcilable, it is suggested that there is an inherent harmony and order—a cosmic undercurrent that underscores the entirety of existence, too vast for any single story to encompass.

Through its reflective tone, "What We Tell Ourselves" invites artists to embrace the unknowable and to recognize that the true value of their work lies beyond the narratives they construct, in the raw and unfiltered essence of their artistic output and its capacity to resonate.