

**AT THE CROSSROADS:**  
**Six Narratives at the Intersection of Identity and Community**  
Cape Cod Museum of Art, Dennis MA July 8 – August 28, 2016

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

Ian Leslie's book, *Curious* (2014), hasn't been far from my side since I read it over a year ago. In it, he describes a scenario that provoked in me a sense of horror that I've never since been able to shake off. Online news service [Reddit](#) recently posed a question to its consumers relative to what might be the most difficult thing to explain about our world to someone unfamiliar with it. The landslide answer was: *I possess a device, in my pocket, that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to man. I use it to look at pictures of cats and get into arguments with strangers* (pg. 84).

Among other things, this scenario describes a person who doesn't have a strong drive to make sense of the world, which is fundamentally catastrophic to fostering relationships. The Internet has bestowed both an immense blessing and a huge curse upon every being who has access to it, worldwide. Our lives are indeed larger because of it, but are they more meaningful? Our myriad contacts acquired through the Cloud form the biggest distraction from the truth, which is that our lives are wide, not deep. With the Internet's extraordinary on-demand capability, we risk thinking we know everything when, in actual fact, we experience life through a veneer of frequently pointless and often false information. The cure, Leslie offers, is curiosity. One measure of how curious one is may be indicated by one's creations. And creation can mean anything, from soup to industry to art. All it means is having a capacity for innovation. Taking comprehensive stock of that on a regular basis is crucial to the health of our planet and every living thing upon her.

Obviously, the art created for this show is one such manifestation, but it doesn't end there. It merely provides the space – the intersection – for self-review, encouraging whatever that next step is in the eternal process of self-inquiry. Do the motifs represented carry any weight? Are they relevant? If so, in what way? If not, why not? From this line of questioning, the art and the artists invite you into a visual dialogue – an opportunity for self-contemplation relative to the overarching question, "Who are you?"

Sincerely and authentically offering yourself in this hugely complicated world means taking a giant step towards evaluating the constructs by which you were raised and which define your life to the present day. To become self-aware is akin to waking from a lucid dream in which you are defined only by the forces in your life. This suggests that blindly conforming to the expectations of others regarding the values and ideals you live by actually feed the *mystery* of your life versus the *mastery* you may aspire to. More to the point, those expectations may, in fact, be absolutely appropriate but only upon your own subjective scrutiny. As in applied science, the process of forming values requires that all of life's experience be distilled from the root into coherent, reliable and well-grounded patterns of behavior. Only then, may you own your own life and, when confronted at the crossroads, wisely choose directions that are right for you.

Consistent with arriving at a crossroads is asking the question, "Where do I go from here?" Arriving at an intersection, we hope we've acquired the education, experience and nurturing necessary to make the most advantageous determination. In some cases, we must grapple with chance and hope for the best, calling less upon personal experience and more upon blind faith as a guide. In other cases, we are unable to move, knowing that we are ill equipped or perhaps too fearful to do

so. What we don't want to do is make hugely important decisions within an identity crisis, or the absence of self-awareness. There are many competing forces that want to define us as them, and the only resolution to this assault is unfaltering self-definition.

The individual narratives in the show each tell a sweeping story on behalf of us all, meaning we all have an important story to share with others. And, where do these stories take us? Why is it even important to go there? The context for these monumental installations -- a community-based, cultural arena -- provides a clue to the answer. The fact is we all enter the Natural World by some means, born into a Family of some kind within a larger Village community of some form. We traverse the winding and arduous Odyssey of life, gathering Friends (or not!) along the way. At the end of each day, we hopefully can separate the Self from the Mask, knowing where we end and another begins.

Perhaps the most sweeping statement of all describes a process of rigorous personal growth that is commensurate with three things: a resonance with life's relentless demands, full responsibility for ourselves and to others, and living life replete with values that are unique to ourselves yet imbued with immense relevance to share with others. From the sharing comes the realization of just how important one human story becomes because, at some crucial intersection, we realize we aren't isolated one from another, after all.

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