

EGO MUSEUM.

A FIELD GUIDE TO PUBLIC ROLES, PRIVATE WORLDS AND REVISION

Six galleries. A mask wardrobe. A detector that shows its working. No psychological verdict.

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This guide accompanies a locally running digital art experiment. It is educational and reflective, not clinical guidance, a psychometric instrument, or a claim about what any one visitor is really like.

01 / The premise: plural selves

We tend to speak about identity as though it were a single portrait. Yet a person may speak differently in a professional meeting, a family conversation, an online forum and solitude. Such differences do not, by themselves, prove duplicity. Roles can be sincere adaptations to relationships, responsibilities and environments.

The Ego Museum makes that plurality visible through six rooms. Each contains a dilemma with two defensible answers. The chosen answer changes light, geometry, suggested pathways and a transparent count of narrative lenses. These feedback effects are artistic design decisions, not evidence of stable psychological traits.

Three distinctions worth keeping

Self-presentation: How we appear or describe ourselves in a context. It may express care, protect boundaries, seek recognition or simply make communication possible.

Self-narrative: The story by which we connect moments into a sense of continuity. Narratives can help orientation, but they remain selective and revisable.

Observable action: Something specific that happened and can be described without pretending to know the whole motive. Action gives evidence, not a final identity verdict.

A useful rule: avoid turning a single moment into a permanent trait. “I declined an invitation last Friday” is narrower and more testable than “I am antisocial.”

02 / Six rooms, six questions

Ambition — What matters when work becomes visible?

Craft and reach need not be rivals. An audience can be a vehicle for work, while an internal standard can protect its integrity.

Approval — How do you receive praise?

Enjoying encouragement does not prove vanity. Seeking specifics can improve learning without cancelling joy.

Privacy — What do you disclose, and to whom?

Neither openness nor reserve is inherently more authentic. Consent, safety and context matter.

Play — What do you do when nobody is grading?

Uninstrumental play may open possibility. Social play can create shared meaning.

Belonging — Can a disagreement remain inside a relationship?

Speaking and listening are both relational capacities; neither alone measures care.

Becoming — Must a new self erase an old self?

Growth often involves reinterpretation rather than deletion. Archives and revisions coexist.

03 / How the Ego Detector works

The “detector” is intentionally a false promise corrected in public. It counts which of five fictional lenses were attached to the selected answers: Autonomy, Recognition, Inquiry, Connection and Exploration. One choice contributes one count to one lens. The interface then displays a playful label for the largest count, or a many-sided label if several tie.

It does not measure: ego, narcissism, self-esteem, mental health, character, maturity, authenticity, or future behaviour. The prompts were authored for narrative play and have no reliability or validity data.

The valuable feature is not the label. It is the audit trail. You can see which decisions produced each count and edit any of them. This makes a useful general lesson: an apparently authoritative summary may be sensitive to framing, a small sample, and reversible interpretation.

Guided experiment A — Reverse the light (10 minutes)

Complete each of the six rooms with the first option. Write down the label and how the artwork felt. Return and choose the second option in every room. Compare the new label and visual impression. Ask: which part changed because the underlying person changed, and which changed because a scoring rule and design palette changed?

Guided experiment B — Contextual masks (10 minutes)

In the Mask Builder, make one mask for a meeting where clarity matters and another for a playful gathering. Choose one public expression (Clarity, Humour, Confidence, Quiet), one protected concern (Wonder, Rest, Connection, Freedom), and a visibility percentage. Compare: which features are contextual? Is any apparent mismatch automatically dishonest?

Guided experiment C — The narrative and the receipt (15 minutes)

Write an identity sentence such as “I am a generous person.” Beside it, write one narrow observation such as “I gave someone an hour of help on Wednesday.” Add a second action that might complicate the narrative. Then revise the identity claim into a more accurate, smaller sentence. The aim is precision, not self-criticism.

04 / A five-question reflective worksheet

1. Which room made me want to justify my answer, and why might both answers be legitimate?

2. Where do I confuse the desire to be appreciated with the requirement to perform?

3. Which boundary is actually important to me in one specific relationship?

4. What playful activity would still matter if nobody saw the result?

5. What identity claim of mine would benefit from a date, an action, or a counterexample?

05 / Responsible interpretation

A changing visual environment can make a choice feel fateful. This is an aesthetic effect, not proof of deep psychological discovery. The route suggestions are fixed mappings for exploration, not predictions. No option is the “correct” or “healthy” response. Visitors may also decline to answer, leave early or read the story-only mode.

The site uses no account system, trackers, remote API, or automatic persistence. Decisions live only in the page state while it is open. A JSON file is generated only when the visitor explicitly clicks Export; the browser handles the local download. Avoid sharing exports containing private writing

unless you choose to.

06 / Further reading and intellectual lineage

These sources offer concepts for inquiry. They do not validate the museum's questions, algorithms, or labels.

Erving Goffman (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

A classic sociological account of roles, audiences and everyday impression management.

Dan P. McAdams (2001), *The Psychology of Life Stories*. *Review of General Psychology* 5(2), 100–122.

A research-oriented introduction to narrative identity and the stories through which people organize experience.

Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (2000), *The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits*. *Psychological Inquiry* 11(4), 227–268.

Self-determination theory context for autonomy, competence and relatedness; not a template for classifying museum visitors.

Claude M. Steele (1988), *The Psychology of Self-Affirmation*. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 21, 261–302.

A theoretical treatment of self-integrity; useful for thinking about threats to self-concept.

Donald W. Winnicott (1971), *Playing and Reality*.

An influential psychoanalytic perspective on play and creativity; interpretive rather than a validation source for these exercises.

07 / After the museum

A good mirror does not pretend to become the face. Carry forward one question that helps you act with greater care or precision. Leave behind any label that asks you to be smaller than your actual complexity.

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