

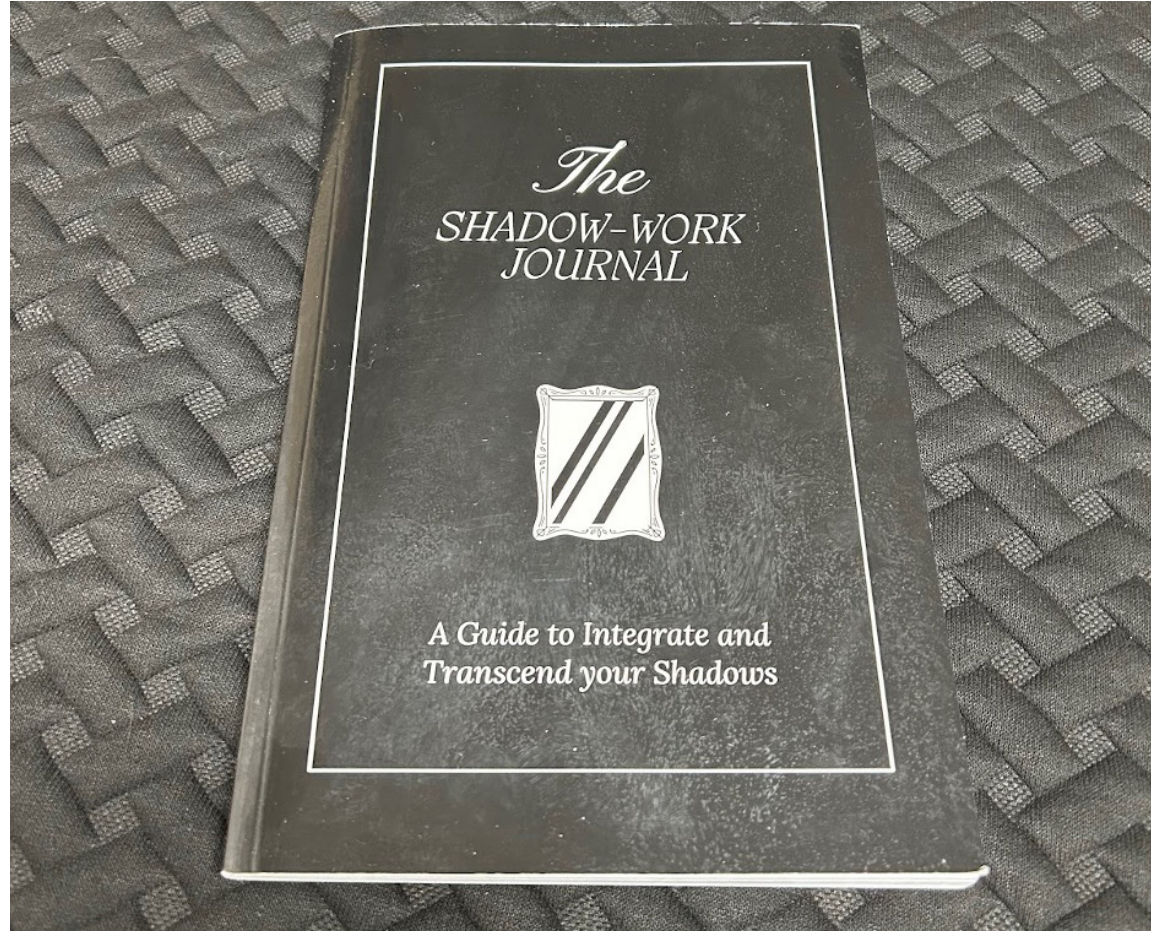
Is TikTok Playing Fair? JONATHAN CERINI

If you're an avid social media user, you may have noticed a consistent stream of posts talking about *The Shadow Work Journal*, a self-help book which can be purchased in the TikTok shop. Shadow work is a form of psychological therapy based on the theory that humans tend to hide aspects of their personality even from themselves. These hidden traits or inclinations are called shadows, and bringing them to the surface is judged to be therapeutic. *The Shadow Work Journal* is a reflection book that assists in discovering the deepest parts of one's self through psychological writing exercises.

Thousands of TikTokers have been creating content sharing their experiences using this product. The truth is, *The Shadow Work Journal* is an innovative and reasonably priced prompt book to buy for your own use or as a holiday gift for a friend. So, what's the catch? The underlying issue is that many of the posts for this product are in fact being used by TikTok to sell books without following the guidelines for transparency in advertising. In essence, transparency requires that a business selling a product online inform potential customers about how it handles, sells, and presents its advertisements. The issue with the way TikTok creators are posting is that they fail to provide enough context to TikTok users. These posts are

actually part of a marketing effort. They are advertisements for *The Shadow Work Journal* that do not show any signs of being such.

Responsible social media always offer users a form of advertisement certification. While this is clearly not prevalent across all platforms, it appears to be more pronounced on TikTok. Originating from China, the app seems to operate under comparatively lax rules regarding transparent advertising. In contrast, in regions like the United States, this discrepancy sparks legal and ethical discussions concerning potential consumer manipulation. The United Kingdom has updated its policies for the app, now requiring a form of labeling for commercial content. This means that the post must be identified as an advertisement, sponsorship, paid partnership, or promotional content. This way, the relationship between the individual customer and the business is transparently identified. The European Union recently passed the Digital Services Act (DSA) which will further protect online users, allowing them to make purchases safely and fairly. Other nations like the United States are doing their part to prevent such deceitful advertising via the Federal Trade Commission. The goal is to spread awareness of the need for truth and honesty



Found in the TikTok Shop, *The Shadow Work Journal* is a therapeutic prompt book meant to help the consumer to understand their psyche more clearly.

Photo by Jonathan Cerini

within consumerist culture.

It still seems that TikTok needs to address this as they manage to frequently duck criticisms. According to Techcrunch, “because of policy loopholes and lax oversight, especially around influencer marketing, coupled with an ongoing lack of ads transparency by TikTok — which offers no publicly searchable ad archive — are

making its video-sharing platform vulnerable to passing off ads as organic content.” Despite this vulnerability, the content consumer does have leverage over what their feed shows them. All social media platforms give users the ability to personalize what they see, enabling them to opt for specific content and avoid anything that's irrelevant or unwelcome.

As the holidays rapidly approach, it is important to find a quality gift for your loved ones. Regardless of what you're going to buy, if you see something online to purchase it is important to be mindful of the product's proper labeling. Make sure you're viewing an advertisement and not investing in a scam.

TV SERIES REVIEW

Steven Spielberg Scores Again! *Life on Our Planet* a Stunning Success LUCAS WERNER

It's been nearly a year since the release of Steven Spielberg's last production, “The Fabelmans.” Now the creator of the iconic

Jurassic Park movies has returned with his latest work, “*Life on Our Planet*,” which made its debut on Netflix in late October. The good news is that



Photo by Lucas Werner

Spielberg has scored again: *Life on Our Planet* is a captivating spectacle from start to finish. This docu-series mainly focuses on the evolution of complex life on Earth. Through the use of computer-generated imagery, viewers are shown what life was like millions of years ago, with live videography of modern animals, such as cheetahs, elephants and bald eagles. The series was produced by Amblin Television and Silverback Films and is narrated by Morgan Freeman.

In Episode 1, viewers are treated to a comprehensive overview of the entire series. Episode 2 delves into the mysteries of life beneath the ocean's surface, exploring the intricate world of plankton and the organisms that follow in its wake. Episodes 3, 4, and 5 meticulously detail the emergence of the first terrestrial organisms, leading us through the evolutionary journey to the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods when dinosaurs dominated the Earth. Episodes 6 and 7 enlighten us

on the evolution of pterosaurs, showing how these avian creatures, alongside mammals, adapted to the post-dinosaur Earth in the aftermath of the Cretaceous era. Episode 8 unveils the chilling narrative of the Ice Age, capturing the ascent of humanity from that frosty epoch to the present day, interwoven with glimpses of machinery in the ever-evolving tapestry of our planet's history.

This Netflix series struck both good and bad chords with me. On the plus side, the use of the previously mentioned animation and filming techniques creates an outstanding visual experience of developments in the natural world, such as the adaptation to different environments and territorial disputes between members of the same species. On the debit side, the “jump-scare” moments, which occur when animals are abruptly consumed unexpectedly or in synchronization with eerie music when transitioning to animals of different periods in

each episode might unsettle individuals unaccustomed to such moments in films, be they live-action or animation

This Netflix series teaches us that our planet is still changing to this day. Unfortunately, however, this change is veering toward disaster. Global warming is clearly on the rise, and we as humans need to act—and quickly—or we may risk extinction. No matter the excuses or circumstances, this issue is our reality. If we simply stand idly by and allow modern life on our planet to perish, what does that say about us as a collective? We need to band together and take care of this problem head-on or risk Armageddon coming for us all. We must focus on this bigger picture, because in the end, we're all going to lose our position as the apex species on this planet. Due to these lessons, *Life on Our Planet* gets a rating of 4.6 out of 5 in my book. If you want to see this stunning series, it's now streaming on Netflix.