Truth and Investment: Lies Are Told to Those Who Care

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Participants discussed paintings they liked and disliked with artists who were or were not personally invested in them. Participants were urged to be honest or polite or were given no special instructions. There were no conditions under which the artists received totally honest feedback about the paintings they cared about. As predicted by the defensibility postulate, participants stonewalled, amassed misleading evidence, and conveyed positive evaluations by implication. They also told some outright lies. But the participants also communicated clearly their relative degrees of liking for the different special paintings. The results provide new answers to the question of why beliefs about other people's appraisals do not always correspond well with their actual appraisals.