

DEAR GLORY · THE WORKING GUIDE

Start *Collecting* Art.

A five-chapter working guide for the person who wants to build a real collection — from \$0, with their own eye. Each chapter ends in a fillable worksheet. Print it or annotate on screen.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Ch. 01 The Collector *Mindset Reset*.

Ch. 02 Train Your Eye *Before You Spend a Dollar*.

Ch. 03 How to Find Emerging Artists *Before Everyone Else*.

Ch. 04 Your First Purchase — and the *Questions That Save You*.

Ch. 05 Building a Real Collection *Over Time*.

BY MORIAH ALISE · DEAR GLORY · HOUSTON · 2026

CHAPTER ONE

The Collector *Mindset Reset.*

Before you buy a single thing, we need to clear two lies out of the way. Because these two are the reason most people who want to collect never start.

Lie number one. *You have to be rich.*

You don't. The art world loves to make you feel like collecting is a club with a velvet rope and a bank statement at the door. That's a story that benefits the people already inside. The truth is people start real collections with a few hundred dollars and a good eye all the time. Prints, works on paper, photography, pieces by artists early in their careers. Some of the most respected collections you've heard of started exactly there. **You are not late and you are not broke. You're early.**

Lie number two. *You have to already know everything.*

You don't need a degree. You don't need to memorize movements and dates and the right names to drop at a dinner. Nobody who collects well started knowing all of that. They started by looking, asking, and buying one thing. **The knowing comes from the doing, not before it.** Anyone who makes you feel stupid for not knowing yet is telling you more about themselves than about you.

Okay. Lies gone. Now here's the part nobody says out loud.

Collecting is not shopping. Shopping is grabbing what catches your eye in the moment and moving on. Collecting is building something. Even a small

collection has a point of view, a thread, a reason these pieces belong together that only makes sense because you chose them.

You don't need that thread figured out on day one. But the second you start thinking like someone *building* something instead of someone *buying* something, you're collecting. That shift is the whole thing.

And one more, because I'm not going to let you walk into this with the wrong idea in your head.

Starting to collect is not the same as starting to invest. Buy what you love and what you can afford. If a piece you bought because it moved you becomes valuable down the line, beautiful, that's a bonus. But buying art as a money move — as a beginner, betting on prices going up — is how people get hurt and how they stop enjoying the one thing that was supposed to bring them joy. We're not doing that. We collect because we love the work first. Everything else is extra.

That's the reset. You're not too poor, you're not too clueless, and you're not shopping. You're building something, on purpose, starting now.

WORKSHEET · CHAPTER ONE

What kind of collector am I *building toward?*

No right answers. This is the page you come back to in a year to see how much you've grown.

01 The first piece of art that ever stopped me in a room was —

A painting at a friend's house, a sculpture at a museum, a photograph on Instagram. Anything.

02 When I imagine a piece of art on my wall in five years, it feels like —

Not what it looks like. What it does. Calm. Sharp. Personal. Public. Loud. Quiet.

03 My honest collecting budget — not what I wish, what I can actually spend — for the first piece:

Comfortable amount

Stretch amount

04 Three feelings I want a collection to give me, not three styles:

05 The lie I'm still believing about who gets to collect — even after reading this chapter:

COMING BACK TO THIS PAGE

Re-read these five answers in twelve months. The interesting part is which answers have changed, not whether you got them “right.” A real collection grows because its collector grew.

CHAPTER TWO

Train Your Eye *Before You Spend a Dollar.*

You don't need to buy art to start collecting. **You need to start looking.** The hardest, slowest, most important thing a new collector can do is build the eye that will catch the right piece when it appears. The eye is not something you're born with. It's something you train.

Most people don't train it because the world makes it easy not to. Galleries close at five. Museum entrance fees feel like a tax. Instagram serves you the same five pieces everyone already saw. So you wait, and you wait, and the eye never sharpens, and then the first time you can afford to buy something you buy whatever's in front of you. That's how most first purchases happen. We're going to do this differently.

The thirty-day looking practice.

For thirty days, look at art on purpose. Not browse it, not scroll past it — look. Spend at least three minutes with one piece. Notice what your eye does first. Notice what you want to look away from. Notice what you keep coming back to. That third thing is the one to write down.

01 Walk one museum room, slowly. Pick one room. Do not try to see the whole museum in an afternoon. One room, thirty minutes, three minutes per piece. Decide which one you'd take home if you could only choose one. Now ask yourself why.

02 Look at the work, then look at the wall text, then look at the work again. The work first — always. The wall text tells you what the institution wants you to think. Your own read comes first. Then read the text. Then look again and see what shifted, and what didn't.

03 Follow ten artists you've never bought before. Pick artists at different career stages, different mediums, different cities. Watch what they post for a month before you click on a single price. Train the eye before you train the wallet.

04 Walk into a gallery without buying anything. Galleries are also free. Walk in, ask one question, stay ten minutes. Nobody is going to make you buy. You are training what a piece feels like in a room you can actually visit, not just a square on a screen.

The eye is a muscle. It takes weeks, not days, to start trusting it. And once it sharpens, you'll start to notice that you can walk into any room and almost instantly know which one or two pieces hold the room together. That instinct is the whole foundation of a real collection.

WORKSHEET · CHAPTER TWO

The thirty-day *looking log*.

Log ten works that stopped you. Doesn't matter where you saw them — museum, gallery, fair, online, a friend's wall. The point is the noticing.

01 Artist

What stopped me

Where you saw it

Look longer, or look away?

02 Artist

What stopped me

Where you saw it

Look longer, or look away?

03 Artist

What stopped me

Where you saw it

Look longer, or look away?

04 Artist

What stopped me

Where you saw it

Look longer, or look away?

05 Artist

What stopped me

Where you saw it

Look longer, or look away?

The pattern across all the works that stopped me:

Subject? Color? Scale? Material? Quietness? Loudness?

CHAPTER THREE

How to Find Emerging Artists *Before Everyone Else.*

This is the one I'm most excited to hand you, because it's the secret hiding in plain sight.

If you want the most meaningful, most affordable way into collecting, it's this. **Back artists early.** Find the people whose work moves you while they're still emerging, while the prices are still human, while a piece is still something you can actually own.

And here's the part that should make you feel powerful. **Early is the one place where you, with a small budget, have the same access as someone with millions.** A blue chip piece costs what it costs no matter who you are. But an emerging artist's work is open to anyone paying attention.

So here's where you actually look.

01 Go where the work is before it hits the gallery. Open studios. Thesis and MFA shows at art schools. Degree shows. This is where artists are showing real work before a single gallery has put a markup on it. Most of these are free to walk into and almost nobody from the public shows up. That's your opening.

02 Follow curators, not just galleries. Galleries show you what they've already decided to sell. Curators are the ones out finding people first. When you find a curator whose eye you believe in, watch who they're watching.

03 Pay attention to group shows. One or two established names bring you in the door, and tucked around them are the artists you've never heard of. That's where you find your person.

04 Use the fairs as a map, not a store. You don't have to buy at a fair. Walk it to train your eye and to see who keeps coming up. Notice which younger galleries are showing work that stops you. Write the names down. Follow them home.

ONE HONEST NOTE

Find emerging artists early because you believe in the work and you want to support someone at the start of something. **That's the reason.** If their career grows and the work becomes valuable, that's the bonus. Never the plan. *The plan is your eye and your belief. The plan is being early because you saw it first.*

WORKSHEET · CHAPTER THREE

Your discovery *map*.

A real map of where, in your city or region, emerging work is being shown. Fill it in once. Use it for a year.

01 Three art schools or MFA programs within driving distance — and when their thesis shows happen:

School / program	Month / week of shows

02 Three curators whose taste I want to track — and where to follow them:

Newsletter? Instagram? A gallery they’re affiliated with? A non-profit space they program?

03 Two galleries in my city that consistently program younger artists I haven’t heard of yet:

04 Two fairs — regional or national — I’m going to walk this year, just to look:

05 The next open studio, MFA show, or group opening on my calendar:

What

When

CHAPTER FOUR

Your First Purchase — and the *Questions That Save You.*

You've reset the mindset. You've trained the eye. You've mapped where the work lives. Eventually you're going to be standing in front of a piece you want to take home, and a person in a clean shirt is going to be standing nearby waiting to talk to you. This chapter is about that conversation.

The four questions every first-time buyer should ask.

01 What's the medium, dimensions, and year of the work? Sounds obvious. It's the question most new buyers skip. Get it in writing on the invoice. Without these three details a piece has no provenance.

02 Is this an original, an edition, or a print — and what's the run? A unique work is one of one. An edition is one of a numbered set (1/25). A print is mass-produced. There's nothing wrong with any of them, but the price should match.

03 What's the artist's exhibition history? Not as a price-justification — as context. You want to know whether this is their first show or their fifteenth, whether they've been included in a museum group show, who else owns the work.

04 What's included in the price, and what's the return / exchange policy? Is framing included? Shipping? Insurance during transit? Can you live with the piece for a week and return it if it doesn't hold? Most good galleries will say yes to some version of this. The ones that won't are telling you something.

Galleries that respect you will answer all four of these questions in five minutes flat, without making you feel stupid. The ones that get prickly or dodge are showing you what working with them long-term would look like.

A note on negotiation.

You can ask. Not aggressively, not with a script — just by saying something like “is there any flexibility on this piece?” The answer might be no. The answer might be a 5-10% discount. The answer might be a payment plan. The point of asking isn’t the discount — it’s that you’ve announced yourself as a buyer who takes the work seriously enough to think about it as a transaction.

What to take home with you.

An invoice. A certificate of authenticity, if the artist provides one. The artist’s contact (or the gallery’s) for future questions. A photo of the piece in the gallery. And if the gallery hasn’t already done it, ask them to introduce you to the artist when the moment is right. A first piece is a relationship, not a transaction.

WORKSHEET · CHAPTER FOUR

The first-purchase *checklist*.

Use this in the gallery. Fill it in while you're there. The point is to slow you down enough to make a real decision.

The piece

Artist

Medium

Title

Year / dimensions

Is it —

- ☐ A unique work (1-of-1)
- ☐ An edition — how many in the run?
- ☐ A print

Price & what's included

Price

Discount asked / offered

- ☐ Framing included
- ☐ Shipping included
- ☐ Insurance during transit included
- ☐ Return / exchange policy clear

Artist context — what did the gallery tell me?

Exhibition history. Other shows. Where else the work has placed.

The honest pause — before you say yes

If you could only own one of three pieces you've seen this year, would this be it? Why?

After purchase — what to take with you

- ☐ Itemized invoice on gallery letterhead
- ☐ Certificate of authenticity (if provided)
- ☐ Artist's contact or rep's contact for future questions
- ☐ Photo of the piece in the gallery
- ☐ Care & install instructions

CHAPTER FIVE

Building a Real Collection *Over Time.*

One piece is not a collection. One piece is a great purchase. A collection is what happens when ten pieces add up to a point of view someone else can read. Most beginners don't make it to ten because no one tells them about the part between piece one and piece ten. So we're going to talk about it.

Keep a real notebook.

From the first piece. A binder, a notebook, a spreadsheet — whatever you'll actually open.

For every piece you own, log: artist, title, year, medium, dimensions, where and when you bought it, what you paid, the gallery's contact, and one paragraph about why you bought it.

Especially that last one. Years from now you will not remember why a piece moved you on the day you bought it unless you wrote it down.

Build a thesis as you go.

You don't need one on day one. But by piece three or four, look at what you've already bought and ask: *what is the through-line?* Often it's not what you thought it was. People who think they collect "abstract painting" actually collect quiet color. People who think they collect "Black figuration" actually collect work about specific kinds of refusal. **Let the thesis come from the pieces, not the other way around.** Then, once you can name it, use it. The next piece either deepens the thesis or breaks it on purpose. Both are good moves.

Live with the work — really.

Hang it. Light it. Move it around every few months. Notice which pieces you stop seeing because they've become wallpaper, and which ones you keep coming back to. The pieces you keep coming back to are telling you something about what to buy next.

Take care of it.

Frame it properly (UV glass for works on paper, conservation matting). Don't hang it in direct sun. Keep humidity reasonable. Photograph each piece for your records. Insure anything you couldn't replace.

Eventually, share it.

Not for credit. Not to flex. To honor the artists who let you live with their work. Loan a piece to a non-profit show. Open your house for an emerging-collector group. Mention the artists by name when you talk about them at dinner. A collection that nobody else gets to see eventually starves the ecosystem you bought into.

A real collection is a long conversation between you and the artists you choose to back. The conversation is the point. The pieces are the receipts.

WORKSHEET · CHAPTER FIVE

Your collection *thesis*.

Even if you only own one piece. Drafting this now teaches you to listen to your own collection.

01 Pieces I currently own — or the three I’d buy first if money weren’t a factor:

Artist / title	Medium / year

02 The honest through-line — what do these pieces have in common that I didn’t plan?

Subject? Color? Material? A specific kind of feeling? A political stance? A geography?

03 My collection thesis — in one sentence:

“I collect _____ because _____.”

04 The next piece I'd buy — does it deepen the thesis or break it on purpose?

☐ Deepens it — explain why:

☐ Breaks it on purpose — explain why:

05 How I'll share what I'm collecting with the artists, the field, and the people around me:

Loan to non-profits. Open studio visits to peers. Name them publicly when the work comes up.

A REAL COLLECTION

is a long conversation between you and the artists you choose to back. **The conversation is the point. The pieces are the receipts.**

Thank you for buying. Once a week in your inbox — dearglory.com. The deepest version of all of this lives in [The Glory Collective](#), \$3/mo and up.