

The Collector's *Philosophy*.

Six sections for the collector who wants to put the philosophy in writing — the exercise Ayesha Selden described on the GloryLand panel. One page. By the time you finish, your collecting practice has a structure.

A WORKSHEET BY MORIAH ALISE · DEAR GLORY · MAY 2026 · [READ THE ARTICLE →](#)

Write the *philosophy* first. Then you collect with intention.

Pamela Joyner asked it on a podcast. Ayesha Selden went home and wrote one. That document — one page, in your own words — is the difference between a collection that accumulates and a collection that compounds. **Take an hour. Run this audit. Write the philosophy.**

How to use this. Move through the six sections in order. Write in full sentences, not bullets — the act of writing forces the clarity that a checkbox lets you skip. When you finish, print it. Put it on the wall by the desk where you make collecting decisions. Update it once a year.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six sections. *One page when you're done.*

Each section is a frame the collectors on the panel returned to over and over. Treat the boxes as prompts, not as a list to complete — the work is the writing underneath each one.

01 WHY

Why are you collecting? What does the collection do for you that nothing else can? What does success look like in ten years — not on the wall, in your life?

- I can state, in one sentence, why I am collecting (not *what*, not *how* — *why*)

- The collection serves a personal purpose beyond the financial return

- I have a sense of what I want to feel when I walk into my home in twenty years

- I know whether I am collecting for the joy, the legacy, the support of artists, or some combination — and the order matters

- I have made peace with the fact that *cultural wealth comes first*. Financial wealth, if it comes, is a byproduct

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

02 WHAT

What are you collecting? Categories. Lineages. Themes. Mediums. Demographics. Geographic focus. The narrower the focus, the stronger the collection — even a one-page philosophy can have a clear thesis.

- I have a defined focus: artists from a region, working in a medium, of a generation, exploring a theme, in conversation with a lineage

- I can name three to five *predecessor* artists whose work the artists I collect are extending

- I know which categories of work I am *not* collecting — and why

- I have a working list of artists I am tracking, with notes on what I am watching for

- I am collecting work that connects to a specific cultural or historical conversation, not just to my own taste

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03 HOW MUCH

Budget. Asset allocation. The numbers that turn the philosophy into a financial practice. Lester Marks said five to ten percent of total assets is reasonable. What's yours?

- I have a written annual collecting budget

- I have a target asset allocation for art as a percentage of my net worth (the panel suggested 5–10%)

- I have a maximum price-per-piece I will pay *without* a board-of-trustees-level conversation with myself

- I have a separate financing strategy for major acquisitions (savings, payment plan, leveraging existing work)

- I have a documented record of every acquisition cost, going back as far as I have been collecting

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04 HOW YOU VET

What due diligence do you do before you acquire? CV, provenance, lineage, advisor consultation, price comparison. The collector who can articulate the vetting process is the collector who buys with intention.

- I review the artist's CV before I make an acquisition decision (past shows, press, residencies, institutional placements)

- I have at least one advisor, gallerist, or knowledgeable peer I consult before major acquisitions

- I compare primary-market pricing to recent secondary-market results when relevant

- I ask the gallery whose other collectors have acquired the artist's work — and where

- I am willing to walk away from a piece I love if the math does not match the CV

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05 HOW YOU PATRON

Beyond ownership. The acts of patronage that distinguish a collector from a buyer. Ayesha called it tossing the ladder back down.

- I have introduced one of my artists to a curator, museum, or other collector in the last twelve months

- I have donated at least one work to a museum or institutional collection — or I have a plan to do so

- I show up for the artists I collect: openings, talks, publications, public conversations

- I have been a paying member of a museum, foundation, or arts non-profit in the last twelve months

- I have introduced a new collector to the field in a meaningful way (mentorship, intro, advisory)

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06 HOW YOU STEWARD

The documentation, insurance, conservation, and succession work that protects what you own. The unglamorous infrastructure that makes the collection survive you.

- Every piece in my collection has a complete file (invoice, COA, condition photos, provenance, exhibition history)

- I have a fine-art insurance rider or policy that covers transit, loans, and current appraised values

- I know one named conservator I could call about any major piece in the collection

- I have a stewardship plan in writing: where every piece goes, who knows where the files live, what my intent is for transfer

- I have considered the leverage strategy (Richard Beavers' point): borrowing against appreciated work rather than selling it

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Where is the philosophy *thinnest*?

Look across the six sections. Find the area where the writing was the hardest, or where the boxes are most empty. That is where the philosophy isn't yet a philosophy — it's still an intention.

What it means to *have* a philosophy.

A philosophy is not the answers. It is the document that holds the answers. If you can read your philosophy out loud and the gallerist on the other end of the conversation hears clarity, the philosophy is working. If it sounds like generalities, it isn't a philosophy yet — it's notes toward one.

THE SECTION YOU ARE TIGHTENING FIRST

The *one section* I am rewriting until it sounds like me —

Three *commitments*. Next ninety days.

Three concrete actions that move the philosophy from draft to practice. A document on the wall. A conversation with an advisor. A piece acquired with the philosophy in hand. Three.

A **commitment** is a specific, dated action that turns the worksheet into your operating practice. Print the philosophy. Schedule the advisor call. Walk into the next gallery with the philosophy in your pocket. Three.

1

COMMITMENT ONE

BY WHEN _____

2

COMMITMENT TWO

BY WHEN _____

3

COMMITMENT THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

Cultural wealth, then *financial* wealth.

The two are not in tension. They are in sequence. You build the philosophy. You buy with intention. You steward what you own. You toss the ladder back down. The financial wealth, if it comes, comes because you built the cultural wealth honestly. Run this again in twelve months. Update what changed.

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