

The *Extraordinary* Audit.

Six questions for anyone trying to deepen their engagement with a contemporary artist's practice. Collectors. Writers. Curators. Advisors. Peers. Six lenses that separate the artist building something structural from the artist building something stylish.

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

Extraordinary is the *structural* labor the field is still catching up to.

It is not where the artist has shown. *It is not how many institutions have collected the work. It is not whether the price is rising. It is whether the practice is doing something the discipline could not do without it. The audit below is how you find out.*

How to use this. Run this on one artist at a time. The artist you are about to buy. The artist you are about to write about. The artist you are about to bring into a show. The artist you have already loved for years and want to understand more deeply. The point is to slow the attention down.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six lenses. *Run them against one artist.*

Answer in full sentences. Not yes/no. If you cannot answer a section, that itself is the diagnostic — you do not yet have the artist you think you have.

01 THE DISCIPLINE

What discipline does this artist's work extend or destabilize? Painting? Photography? Sculpture? Installation? Sound? Social practice? And how, specifically?

- I can name the specific discipline the work operates inside
- I can name the way the work extends or destabilizes that discipline — not just “makes work in”
- The work is not interchangeable with other artists working in the same medium
- If this artist disappeared tomorrow, the discipline would be different for their absence
- I can articulate what the work *contributes* beyond what's already on the wall

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

02 THE MATERIAL

What is the artist's relationship to material? Are the materials doing intellectual work — or are they decorative? The choice of material is rarely neutral in an extraordinary practice.

- I can name the artist's signature materials and explain *why* those materials, not other materials
- The materials carry meaning that connects to the work's larger argument
- The artist has refused at least one obvious material choice (e.g. canvas, oil, marble) for a specific reason
- The material work is reproducible only by this artist — it is not a style anyone could pick up
- I would be able to identify this artist's work from a detail of the material alone

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

03 THE LINEAGE

What history is the work in conversation with? Whose work could it not exist without?

Extraordinary practice is never invented from scratch — it is built on a clear lineage and extends it.

- I can name three to five artists whose work this artist is in conversation with

- I know which of the artist's predecessors they would name themselves (interviews, statements, talks)

- I can articulate what this artist *adds* to the lineage, not just where they sit inside it

- I understand which non-art-historical sources are also in the lineage (literature, music, science, philosophy)

- If a curator built a show pairing this artist with their three closest predecessors, the show would teach me something

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

04 THE METHOD

Is there a method? Can it be named? Whitney calls his “stacking.” Ward accumulates. Beasley layers sound. Method is the thing that makes the work repeatable without becoming formulaic.

- I can describe the artist's process in two or three sentences — not just the visual outcome

- The method has a name (the artist's own, or one the field has given it)

- I understand how a single piece is made — from first material to last touch

- The method allows for variation without losing recognizability

- The method is teachable in concept — even if no other artist could execute it as well

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

05 THE THROUGHLINE

What is the artist building across years? Extraordinary work is not a series of unrelated bodies of work — it is a long-form inquiry returning to the same questions from new angles.

- I can name the question or set of questions the artist has been working on across multiple bodies of work

- I see clear continuity from early work to current work, even when the medium shifts

- The artist's work today makes earlier work look *different* — richer, more anticipatory, more deliberate

- I can describe what I expect from this artist's next body of work without simply describing the last one

- If the artist died tomorrow, the body of work would feel like an arc, not a collection

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

06 THE IMPACT

Has the work moved beyond the gallery? Into discourse, into other fields, into how other artists think and make? Impact is the slow proof that the work is structural.

- I can name a critic, writer, or scholar whose thinking has been shaped by this artist's work

- Younger artists are visibly working in the lineage this artist opened

- The work has produced discourse beyond the gallery — books, panels, syllabi, footnotes

- Institutions that previously could not house this kind of work are now doing so — because of this artist

- I believe this artist will be cited in a syllabus a decade from now — and I can name the course

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

Which *lens* is the strongest for this artist?

Across the six lenses, where does the artist's case land hardest? That is the entry point into their work — the place where the engagement should deepen first.

What to do with what you found.

If most lenses came easy: *you have done the work, and this artist is genuinely extraordinary. Your job now is to deepen the relationship — the studio visit, the work acquired with intention, the writing, the long support.* **If most lenses stalled:** *you do not yet have the artist you thought you had. That is information. Spend more time. The next ninety days are for slow attention, not new acquisition.*

YOUR STRONGEST ENTRY POINT

The *one lens* through which I will deepen my engagement with this artist over the next ninety days —

Three *slow-attention moves*. Ninety days.

Slow attention is not passive. Three concrete actions over the next 90 days that move you from like into knowing.

A slow-attention move is something deliberate: a studio visit. A re-read of three pieces of writing on the artist. A trip to see one work in person. A conversation with someone who knows the work better than you. Three.

1

SLOW-ATTENTION MOVE ONE

BY WHEN _____

2

SLOW-ATTENTION MOVE TWO

BY WHEN _____

3

SLOW-ATTENTION MOVE THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

Glory is the work that *lasts*.

The art world does not need more attention. It needs more understanding. Use this audit to give one artist the kind of slow attention that lets the structural labor of extraordinary work become legible. Come back in ninety days. See what deepened.

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