

The *Fair* Read.

A working notebook for any art fair. What to research before. What to ask in the booth. What to write down before you leave the floor. The reading practice that turns three days into a year of insight.

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

A fair is a *reading exercise*.

Most people walk a fair to see. The ones who walk away with something useful walk to read — the booths, the conversations, the price lists, the silences. This worksheet is the reading practice. Bring it to every fair, every week of every year, and the floor stops feeling overwhelming.

How to use this. Use this in three passes: before the fair (research), during the fair (capture in the booth), and after the fair (synthesis within 48 hours). Print it. Carry it. Or fill it out digitally between rooms. The point is to leave with something you didn't have walking in.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six areas. *The pre-during-after read.*

The first two areas are before the fair. The middle two are at the fair. The last two are within 48 hours of leaving. The shape is intentional.

01 BEFORE · RESEARCH

The work you do before stepping onto the floor. The single highest-leverage hour you can spend on a fair.

- I have the full exhibitor list and I've marked the 10-15 galleries I want to see
- I know which artists are showing where — cross-referenced against my interests
- I've identified at least three booths where I have a real reason to be (collector relationship, advisor recommendation, artist I follow)
- I have a sense of which booths will be busy at which times
- I've reviewed at least one critic's preview of the fair (Hyperallergic, ARTnews, Cultured)

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

02 BEFORE · LOGISTICS

The non-art layer that determines whether the fair is productive or exhausting. Logistics are not optional.

- I have the fair hours and any preview/VIP windows on my calendar
- I've identified the talks, panels, and side events I'll attend
- I have appointments scheduled with at least two people I want to see in person
- I know where the food, the bathrooms, and the quiet corners are
- I have a way to take notes (notebook, phone, voice memo) and a way to charge my devices

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

03 DURING · BOOTH NOTES

What you write down per booth. A simple structure that you repeat for every gallery worth a second look.

- I'm noting: *gallery name, artist(s), one work that stopped me, why*
.....
- I'm capturing price information when offered (or asking, even when it isn't)
.....
- I'm noting installation details (lighting, hang, scale relationships)
.....
- I'm photographing inventory I want to remember — with the wall label visible
.....
- I'm marking booths I want to *return to* later in the day or the run
.....

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

04 DURING · CONVERSATIONS

The actual gold of any fair is the conversations. Capture them or they evaporate by Monday.

- I'm collecting business cards or contact info from every meaningful conversation
.....
- I'm noting *names* of people I met and what we discussed
.....
- I'm asking real questions: what's selling, what's their next show, who else they recommend
.....
- I'm asking artists I meet about their next body of work, not their CV
.....
- I'm writing down *verbatim* any line that stopped me — from a dealer, critic, or collector
.....

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

05 AFTER · CAPTURE

Within 48 hours of leaving the fair: synthesize while it's still fresh. Most people skip this step. It's where the value lives.

- I've written a one-page summary of the fair: what I saw, what I learned, what I missed
- I have a short list of works I would buy if budget appeared
- I've noted at least one trend, conversation, or observation I want to track for the next 6 months
- I've identified one person I want to deepen the relationship with
- I've taken a hard look at what I regret — not buying, not asking, not staying longer

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

06 AFTER · FOLLOW-UP

The three notes you send within 48 hours. The single thing most attendees never do. The single thing that compounds the fair into next year.

- I've sent a thank-you / nice-to-meet-you to at least three people
- I've followed up with any gallery I'm considering a real conversation with
- I've sent the artist whose work moved me a short note — even if I'm not buying
- I've calendared one follow-up action for 30 days out
- I've added new contacts to my contact system, not just to my phone

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

Where in the fair are you *weakest*?

Look across the six areas. Find the one where you consistently lose value — before, during, or after. That's the one to tighten next fair.

Three places *most fair-goers* leak.

The pre-research never happens. *They show up cold.* **Conversations don't get captured.** *By Monday the names are gone.* **The follow-up never gets sent.** *The relationship dies on the floor.* Identify which of these (or which other gap) is most yours.

THE FAIR-READ HABIT YOU'LL BUILD

The *one habit* you're practicing at the next fair —

Three *capture habits*. Next fair.

Three small, repeating practices that turn the floor from chaos into signal. The point is repetition, not heroics.

A capture habit is something small you do at every booth or every conversation, every time, until it's automatic. Three is the right number. Write them.

1 CAPTURE HABIT ONE

BY WHEN _____

2 CAPTURE HABIT TWO

BY WHEN _____

3 CAPTURE HABIT THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

A fair is what you *walked away with*.

Not what you saw. Not what you posted. What you walked away with — in notes, in relationships, in clarity about where the work is moving. Bring this back to the next fair. Build the practice. The floor changes when the read does.

Moriah Alise

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