

The *Geography* Audit.

The map widened. Most artists are still pitching the old one. Five sections to pick the two cities you will actually build in — a test-kitchen city to prove the work, a destination city to ratify it — and the ninety-day moves you will make in each.

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

Build *geographically parallel*.

*New York is still king. The map widened. Both are true. The artists who win in 2026 are the ones who stop choosing and start layering — a test-kitchen city to prove the work, a destination city to ratify it, and a deliberate plan in each. **Pitching only the old map will leave real money on the table.** This audit is how you build the new one for yourself.*

How to use this. Move through the five sections in order. Be honest about where you are now, ambitious but realistic about where you are going, and concrete about the ninety-day moves. The point is not to pick the prettiest city. The point is to pick the *right* two cities for the work you are actually making.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Five sections. *Two cities by the time you finish.*

Mexico City. Lisbon. Dallas. Detroit. Houston. New York. Los Angeles. The four cities the Edit named are not the only options — they are the pattern. Apply the pattern to your own situation.

01 WHERE YOU ARE NOW

Be specific about your current geography. Where do you live and work? Where are your existing collectors? Where has the press been most receptive? Where do your peers most often show? The audit starts with the truth, not the aspiration.

- ☐ I can name the city my career currently sits in — not where I wish it sat
- ☐ I have a current count of how many of my collectors live in that city versus elsewhere
- ☐ I know which two or three cities are second to mine in collector concentration for my work
- ☐ I have done at least one show, fair, or studio visit outside my home city in the last twelve months
- ☐ I can name one writer, curator, or gallerist who actively pays attention to my work in a city that is not my home city

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

02 WHERE YOU WANT TO BE IN THREE YEARS

Ambition is not vague. Name the cities, name the institutions, name the collector profiles. Three years is short enough to require honesty and long enough to actually be possible. Where do you want this work to sit by 2029?

- ☐ I can name two cities I want this work to be actively shown in by 2029 (in addition to my home city)
- ☐ I can name one museum or foundation in each of those cities that would be a credible institutional placement
- ☐ I can describe the collector profile I am trying to attract in each of those cities (price range, sector, lifestyle)
- ☐ I have a sense of which gallerist or dealer would be the right partner in each city
- ☐ I have written down what success in each city would actually look like — sold-out presentation, foundation acquisition, press coverage, residency, sustained collector base

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

03 THE TEST-KITCHEN CITY

One of your two cities is the test kitchen. Less crowded. More dealer attention. Earlier collectors. Often lower cost. This is where you prove the work in front of a real audience, get the press to write the longer piece, and build the first ten collectors who hold the work and would talk about it. Mexico City. Lisbon. Dallas. Detroit. Houston. Pick yours.

- ☐ I have identified one specific test-kitchen city — not three, one
- ☐ I have a credible reason that city is right for my work (cultural narrative, collector base, local pride, accessible infrastructure)
- ☐ I know one named gallerist, curator, or peer in that city who I could meaningfully reach out to in the next 30 days
- ☐ I have a plan for a first physical visit to that city in the next 90 days (show, fair, studio visit, talk, residency)
- ☐ I have a target of three to five new collectors I would build relationships with in that city over the next 12 months

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

04 THE DESTINATION CITY

*The destination city is where the proof gets ratified. New York. Los Angeles. London. These are the cities where primary-market position becomes durable, secondary-market value gets established, and institutional credibility translates anywhere. **You don't come to the destination empty-handed.** You come holding the proof from the test kitchen.*

- ☐ I have identified one destination city — the one where my career's upper ceiling is actually built
- ☐ I know which two or three galleries in that city would be a credible primary-market home for the work
- ☐ I have a clear sense of what the gallery in that city would need to see from me before saying yes (proof, attendance, institutional placement, collector names)
- ☐ I am building the proof in the test-kitchen city *first*, with the destination conversation in mind
- ☐ I have a target date by which I want to be in active conversation with the destination-city gallery

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

05 DIRECT-FROM-STUDIO — THE PARALLEL TRACK

Twenty percent of high-net-worth collector purchasing is now direct-from-studio. That is not an alternative to the gallery system — it is a parallel track. The artists with the most durable careers run both. The direct relationships build resilience. The gallery system builds position. You need both.

- ☐ I have at least one serious collector who has bought directly from my studio in the last 12 months
- ☐ I have a process for studio visits with collectors that does not feel improvised (calendar, follow-up, documentation)
- ☐ I have a small list (3–10 names) of collectors I am quietly building direct relationships with, in any city
- ☐ I have a clear sense of which works in my studio are placed through the gallery and which can move directly, and why
- ☐ I have not let direct-from-studio cannibalize my gallery relationship — my gallery is in the loop on the relationships that matter

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

Which city is *most* the right test kitchen?

Look across the four cities the Edit named — Mexico City, Lisbon, Dallas, Detroit — plus any other city you are seriously considering. Apply the three-part pattern: accessible infrastructure, resident collector base with local pride, plausible cultural narrative. Score each one. Pick one.

The three-part *pattern*.

*The four cities that opened up are not random. They all share the same three conditions: **accessible real estate for infrastructure, a resident collector base with local pride and capital, and a plausible cultural narrative that did not need a PR firm to manufacture it.** The cities that have one or two of the three boom-bust. The cities with all three sustain. Score your candidate cities against the pattern. The one with the highest score is your test kitchen.*

YOUR TEST-KITCHEN CITY

The *one city* I am building in over the next ninety days —

Three *ninety-day moves*. In the test-kitchen city.

Three dated, specific actions inside the test-kitchen city in the next ninety days. The point is to convert geography from theory to practice. A visit. A relationship. A show. A studio Zoom. A coffee with a writer. Pick three.

A **ninety-day move** is a specific, dated action in the test-kitchen city that you will actually do. A trip booked. A studio visit scheduled. A piece pitched to a writer in that city. A coffee with one gallerist. A direct outreach to two new collectors. Three.

1 NINETY-DAY MOVE ONE

BY WHEN _____

2 NINETY-DAY MOVE TWO

BY WHEN _____

3 NINETY-DAY MOVE THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

New York didn't lose. *It just stopped being the only place.*

*The artists who build for the new map win twice — once in the city where the base is deepening, and once in New York when they come holding the proof. The collectors who build for the new map get better prices, closer relationships, and a real seat at the next decade. **Build geographically parallel.** Run this audit again every six months. The map keeps widening. So should you.*

Moriah Alise

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