

The *Museum* Audit.

Six areas for any artist or collector operating around a museum: identifying which kind it is, mapping its revenue, naming its decision-makers, and figuring out where you can actually move inside it.

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

The museum is a *balance sheet*.

Two kinds of museums exist in your city. One holds a permanent collection and runs on four revenue streams. The other shows the work without owning it and runs on two. Most artists and collectors operate around both for decades without knowing which is which.

Knowing changes the conversation.

How to use this. Fill this out for the museums in *your* city — the ones whose openings you attend, whose acquisitions you'd want, whose curators you might one day meet. Pick two: one collecting, one non-collecting. If you can't tell which is which, that's the first thing you'll find out.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six areas. *What you actually know about the institution.*

For each: name names. The museum, the curator, the board chair, the year of the last acquisition. Vague answers don't move careers.

01 IDENTIFICATION

Which kind of museum is this? Collecting (permanent collection + endowment) or non-collecting (programs only, no collection)?

- I can name the major collecting museum in my city (e.g., MFA Houston, Whitney, Broad)
- I can name the major non-collecting museum in my city (e.g., CAM Houston, ICA Boston, Serpentine)
- I know *without checking* which is which when I attend an opening
- I can name one show this year at each that I've actually seen
- I know whether each museum charges admission — and what that signals about their revenue

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

02 REVENUE

How does this museum actually make money? Earned, endowment, contributions, government — which streams are live?

- I know whether this museum has an *endowment* — and roughly how large
- I know who the named annual gala or fundraiser benefits and roughly what it raises
- I can name two corporate sponsors who regularly support the program
- I know whether they rent the space for events as part of their earned revenue
- I have a sense of whether this museum is currently financially healthy or stretched

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03 DECISION-MAKERS

Who actually decides what gets shown, what gets acquired, and how the budget moves? Name them.

- I know the name of the director / chief curator currently leading the museum
- I can name two curators on staff and what they tend to program
- I know who chairs the board of trustees — or can find out in 30 seconds
- I have a sense of which board members are major donors vs. honorary
- I know who runs the acquisitions committee or its equivalent

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04 ACQUISITIONS

What's actually in the permanent collection (for collecting museums) — and what just came in or went up?

- I can name three artists in this museum's permanent collection whose work I'd want next to mine
- I know when the museum last announced a major acquisition (year, artist, work)
- I have a sense of how much of the collection is actually on view at any given time
- I know whether this museum has *deaccessioned* work in the last five years — and roughly why
- I know which donors recently gifted work to the collection

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05 PROGRAMMING

What kinds of shows? What artists? What conversation is the museum trying to belong to right now?

- I can name the current show on view without looking it up
- I know which artist had a museum solo here in the last 24 months
- I can identify the curatorial point of view of the program (named, not vibes)
- I know which artists the museum has shown more than once over the last decade
- I have a sense of what's *missing* from the program that, if added, would change the museum's role in the field

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06 ACCESS

Where you can actually meet the people inside this museum. Every museum has entry points. Most artists never find them.

- I have attended this museum's annual gala or major fundraiser at least once
- I know which member-level events bring you into proximity with curators
- I have spoken in person to a curator from this museum in the last 12 months
- I know whether the museum runs talks, walk-throughs, or open studios as part of its programming
- I have at least one named contact inside the institution I can email without a cold intro

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Where are you *operating blind*?

Look across the six areas. Find the one where the absence of knowledge is most quietly costing you — the one where, if you knew it tomorrow, the next conversation would land differently.

What “operating blind” *actually looks like.*

You're operating blind when you walk into a budget meeting without knowing how the institution funds its season. When you say yes to a show without knowing whether your work will be acquired or just shown. When you accept “we don't have the budget” as a final answer instead of a position. When you meet a board member at a gala and don't know they wrote the check that keeps the lights on. The point of the audit is to stop walking in blind.

THE AREA YOU'RE CLOSING FIRST

The *one area* you're going to research, ask about, or show up for in the next thirty days —

Three *conversations*. Thirty days.

Closing the gap is a series of specific conversations — not abstract reading. Three named people, three specific asks.

A museum conversation is named, scheduled, and specific. A coffee with a curator. A board-member intro from a mutual contact. A direct ask of the development office. Write three.

1 CONVERSATION ONE

BY WHEN _____

2 CONVERSATION TWO

BY WHEN _____

3 CONVERSATION THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

Operate *inside* the museum, not in front of it.

The museum is doing financial, political, and curatorial work in plain sight every season. Most people never see it. You're going to. Come back to this in thirty days. See what's changed in what you know — and in what you're now able to ask for.

Moriah Alise

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