

The *Ownership* Audit.

*Six areas of post-acquisition infrastructure. What you have. What's missing.
The first move to fix it — for one piece, or for an entire collection.*

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

We celebrate *acquisition*. But we have no infrastructure for *ownership*.

*The moment a sale closes, the gallery's machinery moves on to the next deal. The collector walks away from the celebration into a void: no storage plan, no insurance conversation, no documentation framework, no clear sense of what the work needs to survive long-term. **Stewardship is what you build after the celebration ends.***

How to use this. Pick one piece in your collection — or work through it once for each. Move through the six areas. Check what you actually have. Write down what's missing. Name the first move. The audit is not a verdict. It's the start of the conversation that should have happened the day you took possession.

If you own one piece, this takes 20 minutes. If you own a collection, do it on the three most important pieces first.

THIS AUDIT IS FOR —

ARTIST & TITLE

DATE ACQUIRED

MEDIUM / DIMENSIONS

ACQUIRED FROM

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six areas. *Check what's actually here.*

For each area: tick the boxes that match what you actually have on hand — not what you intend to put in place. Be honest. The empty boxes are the work.

01 DOCUMENTATION

The paper trail. Provenance, COA, invoices, condition reports, high-resolution photographs. The record that proves you own what you own.

- Signed invoice / bill of sale from the gallery or seller
- Certificate of *Authenticity* (COA) from the artist or estate
- Detailed condition report at acquisition (signed and dated)
- High-resolution photographs of front, back, signatures, and any inscriptions
- Provenance chain — previous owners, exhibitions, publications, if applicable
- Copy of any artist's documentation on materials, installation, or care

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

02 DISPLAY

How the piece lives in the room. Mounting, lighting, environment. The slow damage you can't see in the first year shows up in the fifth.

- Hung or installed using the method appropriate to the work (not just “a nail”)
- Out of direct sunlight and away from strong UV sources
- Not directly above or beside a heat source, fireplace, or HVAC vent
- Climate is stable — not a bathroom, kitchen, or unconditioned space
- If it requires display lighting, the bulbs are *low-UV* and at the right distance
- Hardware (wire, hooks, anchors) rated for the actual weight of the piece

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03 INSURANCE & VALUE

The financial layer. Coverage that reflects current value, not purchase price. A homeowner's policy is rarely enough.

- The work is listed on a *fine-art rider* or a standalone fine-art policy
- Insured value reflects the current market — not what you paid five years ago
- An independent appraisal has been done in the last 3–5 years
- Coverage extends to transit, loans, storage, and natural disasters
- You know your deductible and what triggers a claim
- You have a copy of the policy where you can find it in an emergency

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

04 CONSERVATION & CARE

What the work itself requires to survive. Materials knowledge, a real conservator in your contacts, a care plan.

- You understand the materials — what the piece is made of and how it behaves
- You have a *written care plan* (cleaning, handling, what never to do)
- You know one named conservator you could call about this piece
- You know who handled it last and what they did (cleaning, restoration, repair)
- You know the artist's preference on conservation — if they're living and reachable
- You have backup digital files for any time-based, photographic, or digital work

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05 STORAGE & TRANSPORT

What happens when it's not on the wall. The space, the packing, the people who move it. Most damage happens here.

- If stored, the space is *climate-controlled* (temperature and humidity)
- Storage is dry, dark, and not in a basement or attic
- The piece is wrapped in archival, non-acidic material — not bubble wrap touching the surface
- You know who would move it if you moved tomorrow (not a general moving company)
- You have insurance coverage that extends to transit
- You have a method to inventory and track the work if it moves between spaces

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06 ESTATE & SUCCESSION

What happens to the work when you're not the one making decisions. The hardest area to face, and the one most consistently skipped.

- The piece is named in your will or estate documents (not just “personal property”)
- Your stated intent is clear — gift, sale, donation, hold-in-trust, deaccession
- The named recipient or institution knows the piece exists and is willing to receive it
- Estate documents reference the appraisal and provenance file
- An advisor, executor, or family member knows where the documentation lives
- You've considered the tax implications of transfer — gift, sale, donation, deaccession

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

Find the *most exposed* area.

Look across the six areas you just audited. Where are you most exposed — meaning, where would a single event (a leak, a move, an unexpected loss, a sudden estate question) do the most damage right now?

A few ways to think about *exposed*.

Exposed doesn't mean “biggest gap.” It means: where the absence of infrastructure could cost you the most — financially, sentimentally, or in cultural value — if something happened tomorrow.

For most collectors, the most exposed areas are usually insurance, conservation, or estate. These are the ones where the gap is invisible until it isn't.

THE AREA YOU'LL ADDRESS FIRST

The *one area* you're closing the gap on next —

Three *conversations*. Thirty days.

Stewardship doesn't happen alone. Each area you close requires you to call someone — an appraiser, a conservator, an estate attorney, a registrar. Name three calls you'll make in the next thirty days. Schedule them on your calendar before you close this PDF.

The point of this section is to turn the audit from a list into a calendar item. Write who you'll call, what you're calling for, and by when. That's how it moves from intention to infrastructure.

1 CONVERSATION ONE

BY WHEN _____

2 CONVERSATION TWO

BY WHEN _____

3 CONVERSATION THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

Stewardship is what you build *after* the celebration.

The art world has built an efficient machine for moving things from studio to gallery to collector. It has not built the infrastructure for what happens after the sale. You are building it

now — for one piece, then the next, then the collection. Come back to this in thirty days. Run it again. See what closed.

Moriah Alise

DEAR GLORY · THE GLORY EDIT
MAY 2026 · [DEARGLORY.COM](https://dearglory.com)