

The *Refusal* List.

What you're saying no to this year. Opportunities, partnerships, requests, explanations, rooms, identities. The boundaries that define what stays in — and the career architecture they make possible.

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

The artists doing the most interesting work right now are saying *no* to a lot of things.

Refusal is not absence. It's architecture. *Every no you say out loud builds the negative space that lets the yes become legible. The audit below is how you figure out which refusals are doing the most work in your career right now — and which ones you haven't named yet.*

How to use this. Take your time. For each area, write the specific thing you're refusing — not the category. “Brand collaborations” is not a refusal. “The brand collaboration that came in last Tuesday that I'm going to decline by Friday” is.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six categories. *The actual refusals.*

Each area is a place where refusal does work. For each: name what you're refusing, why, and what the refusal protects.

01 OPPORTUNITIES

The shows, fairs, residencies, gigs, and projects you're refusing this year. Sometimes the strongest career move is the show you didn't take.

- I have refused at least one show, fair, or opportunity in the last six months
- I have a clear sense of which categories of opportunity I'm not available for
- I am not afraid to leave money on the table for the wrong room
- I know the difference between an opportunity that feeds the work and one that just feeds the calendar
- I have refused at least one thing I was excited about because it wasn't the right time

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

02 PARTNERSHIPS

The deals, collaborations, sponsorships, and partnerships you're refusing. The audience will read every one you say yes to.

- I have a written rule for what kinds of partnerships I won't take
- I can name a brand or organization I've turned down this year
- I know which industries my audience would lose trust over if I associated with
- I require alignment, not just budget, before saying yes
- I have refused a partnership because the framing was wrong, not just the money

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03 REQUESTS

The asks for time, advice, mentorship, attention, free labor. The compounding leak nobody talks about.

- I have one weekly pattern of requests I now decline by default
- I'm comfortable not responding to messages that don't require a response
- I have a clear policy on free studio visits, intros, advisory work, jury service
- I do not feel obligated to grant access just because someone asked
- I have at least one polite, copy-pasteable no I use without guilt

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04 EXPLANATIONS

The defenses of your work or position you're refusing to mount. This is the deepest refusal in the practice.

- I have stopped justifying one specific choice in the work that I used to over-explain
- I have refused to translate my work for an audience that will not understand it
- I have a clear sense of who I am no longer trying to win over
- I can let a misreading sit without correcting it
- I trust the right audience to recognize the work without my coaching

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05 ROOMS

The spaces, dinners, events, and openings you're refusing to enter. Every room you turn down is a vote for the one you walk into instead.

- I have a list of rooms I no longer feel obligated to be in
- I have left at least one ongoing affiliation in the last 12 months
- I'm clear on the rooms where I'm visible to be seen vs. visible to be misread
- I no longer attend things out of fear of missing out
- I'm not in any room where I'd be embarrassed for my mentors to see me

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06 IDENTITIES

The narratives, labels, and framings about you you're refusing to inherit. The most political refusal on this list.

- I have refused at least one label the field has tried to attach to me
- I have stopped letting press or institutions frame my work in a way I don't recognize
- I know which generational / regional / categorical box I will not be placed inside
- I am not the spokesperson for anything I didn't sign up to be the spokesperson for
- I have rewritten my bio to refuse a framing I'd previously accepted

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The *refusal that's doing the most work.*

Look across the six categories. Find the single refusal that, by being held in place this year, is creating the most clarity in your practice.

What makes a refusal *load-bearing*?

It has cost you something. *Real money, real opportunity, real ease.* **It is consistent.** *Held in public, not just in private.* **It clarifies the work.** *The audience now sees you more clearly because of what you don't do. These are the refusals that compound.*

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT REFUSAL

The *one refusal* you're holding most carefully this year —

Three *refusals*. Thirty days.

Three specific things you're going to say no to in the next 30 days. Not categories. Specifics. With names, with dates, with the language you'll actually use.

A refusal is specific, dated, and spoken (or written) out loud to the person being refused. Vague self-talk doesn't compound. Three. Write them.

1 REFUSAL ONE

BY WHEN _____

2 REFUSAL TWO

BY WHEN _____

3 REFUSAL THREE

BY WHEN _____

CLOSE

Refusal is the *shape* of the career.

The yeses are where the work happens. The no's are what made room for the yeses to happen. Every artist whose work you respect has a refusal list as long as their CV. Build yours. Come back to it in 30 days.

Moriah Alise

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