

# The *Self-Host* Audit.

*Six questions for the artist about to commit to self-hosting an exhibition. Run this before you book the venue. Before you tell anyone the date. Before the runway gets shorter than the work requires.*

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

The show you *give yourself* is the one that teaches you.

**The audit is not the show.** *The audit is the diagnostic you run before you commit, so the show you commit to is the one you can actually deliver. Be honest with the answers. Be honest with the empty boxes. The empty boxes are the work.*

**If you are ready for the full execution system after the audit, the Exhibition Planning Workbook** *walks you through the entire build — 118 pages, 14 chapters, the \$3,500 savings challenge, pricing logic, marketing sequences, and the post-show evaluation framework.*

**How to use this.** This is a pre-commit tool. Run it *before* you book the venue, before you announce the date, before you start telling people the show is happening. If you have already booked the venue, run it anyway — better to know now than discover at week six. When you are ready for the full step-by-step execution, the Exhibition Planning Workbook picks up where this audit leaves off.

## SECTION I · THE AUDIT

### Six areas. *Before you commit.*

*Each area asks whether you have the material a self-hosted show actually requires. If a box is empty, write empty. That is the box you go fix before you book the venue.*

## 01 PREMISE

*Why this show, why now, and what argument it is making. Without a clear premise, every later decision drifts. The premise is the gravity.*

- I can state the show's argument in *one sentence* a stranger would understand
- I know why the show needs to happen *this year* and not next
- The show is connected to a specific moment in my practice — not just “I have work, I should show it”
- I can name one thing the show will change about how my work is read
- If a journalist asked me *what is this show about?* I would not improvise the answer

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

## 02 THE WORK

*Do you have enough work, finished or finishable on the timeline you have, that coheres around the premise?*

- I have at least *70 percent* of the work either complete or in advanced progress
- The work I have actually coheres around the show's argument — not just stylistically
- I know which pieces are anchors and which are supporting
- I have a realistic finish date for the remaining work that leaves time for installation
- I am not relying on work I have not started to make the show whole

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

### 03 AUDIENCE

*Who is the show for? Be specific. "Everyone" is not an answer.*

- I can name the primary audience in one phrase (e.g., "Houston-based first-time collectors," "Black women in their 30s and 40s," "arts professionals in the Northeast")

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- I know where this audience lives — geographically *and* online

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- I already know at least 15 to 25 people in that audience by name

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- I have a way to reach them that does not depend on an algorithm

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- I have one named person from that audience whose presence at the opening would matter most

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

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### 04 VENUE & BUDGET

*Where the show happens, when, and what it actually costs. The most common breaking point in self-hosted shows is here.*

- I have at least three real venue options identified with rental cost confirmed in writing

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- I have a target date that gives me at least *six months* of runway

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- I have an all-in budget (production, framing, install, opening, marketing, 15% contingency) written down

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- I have a financing plan — savings, sponsorship, sales preorders, grants — not just a hope

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- I have run the math on what the show needs to sell to be financially neutral

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

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## 05 TEAM & LOGISTICS

*Who is doing the work besides you? The gallery system distributes roles. Self-hosting collapses them onto the artist unless you build a small team.*

- I have named the person or people helping with installation
- I have named the person or people handling PR & marketing (even if it is me, I have *named* it)
- I have a photographer / videographer scheduled for opening night
- I know who is at the door and who handles the guest list at the opening
- I have at least one person who can step in if I am overwhelmed on the day

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

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## 06 AFTER THE SHOW

*What happens when the show closes? This is the area artists most often skip — and the area where most of the learning lives.*

- I know where every piece goes after the show comes down (stays with me, with collectors, with the gallery, with the venue)
- I have a follow-up sequence planned for everyone who attended the opening
- I have a post-show critique conversation scheduled with one trusted peer or advisor
- I will do a written post-show audit within two weeks of closing
- I have an answer to *what's next* ready before opening night so I can answer it confidently when asked

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

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## Where is the show *not yet ready*?

Look across the six areas. Find the one where the gap is largest and most likely to break the show under load. That is the area to address first — before you commit to a date.

### What *breaking under load* looks like.

**The show breaks when one area collapses and there is no buffer.** *The venue falls through and there is no backup. The work isn't ready and the opening is in three weeks. The budget runs out and the install isn't paid for. The audience doesn't show up because the outreach started six weeks before opening instead of six months. Identify the area in your audit where the buffer is thinnest. That is the area to address now.*

#### THE AREA YOU'RE CLOSING THE GAP ON FIRST

The *one area* I am shoring up before I commit to a date —

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## Three *moves*. Next thirty days.

Three specific actions that close the gap in your weakest area. Names, dates, dollar amounts where relevant. Three. Not five. Not ten.

**A pre-commit move** is a single decision or action that closes a gap before you commit to the show. Confirm a venue. Lock a budget number. Make the call to a potential team member. Talk to a collector about a pre-sale. Three.

**1 PRE-COMMIT MOVE ONE**

BY WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

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**2 PRE-COMMIT MOVE TWO**

BY WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

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**3 PRE-COMMIT MOVE THREE**

BY WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

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CLOSE

## The show you *give yourself*.

If the audit shows the show is not ready, you are not giving up. You are choosing the version of the show that can actually be delivered. Run this again in thirty days. See what closed. Then pick the date.

*For the full execution — once you have committed to the date — the  
at [dearglory.com/workbook](https://dearglory.com/workbook) is the 118-page step-by-step. Yours to keep.*

*Moriah Alise*

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