

NEW DIRECTION

On the heels of her debut as director of PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, former gallerist and constant visionary **Helen Toomer** talks to us about this year's New York edition and the prospect of the future.

BY LAUREN PELLERANO GOMEZ



PULSE Director Helen Toomer
beside Reed Seifer's *New York
Is a Lot of Work*, 2011.

How do you see this year being different from last year's fair? This upcoming fair will mark my first year in the directorship. Since I came on board, I don't think the vision for PULSE has changed, but obviously it is physically evolving.

What, in your view, is the focus of PULSE—or the fair's niche? PULSE has always been a place for discovery and connectivity. The focus is always on the artists, on connecting them and our gallerists to our collectors, curators and press.

Can you tell us a little bit more about this edition's focus on the future? The art world is always talking about "the next greats" or "the future top 10 artists," so we wanted to discuss the future in more organic terms. We did this by gathering a group of curators to discuss what the future means to them in terms of curating the artists and the artwork and how their role within the community is evolving.

Explain the relationship between PULSE Miami and PULSE New York. I see them as a continued

conversation, each exploring different threads of the same idea.

How are the two fairs in dialogue and how do they differ from each other? New York has an expansive, inbuilt community of people—culturally curious people—who are not even necessarily in the art industry. Because of the cultural capital there, people gather more easily. Obviously, in Miami there is an arts community that is growing, and I'm really interested in how that's growing, but because people largely descend upon Miami, there's a different energy.

Tell us a little bit about PULSE Pause and PULSE Play. As you can tell, we love alliteration. I think everyone is throwing around the term "fair fatigue" and how fairs can be big and overwhelming. PULSE isn't; it's much more intimate and welcoming. But you still need places to pause. For PULSE Play, we asked our exhibitors to submit digital video art by the artists, and then

Billy Zhao of the Marina Abramović Institute picks a thread and curates. **Clearly, when it comes to contemporary art fairs, it's not just about the art. In your view, what is it that drives an art fair?** In addition to the art, it's about community. And that's a reason why I wanted to move the fair back to March. I really see March in New York as a sort of awakening, a time for people to step out of the snow. For people who base their travel or their work travel around the art fairs, it's kind of like summer camp for adults. **Where do you see PULSE in five years?** This is the 10th year of PULSE. So, it has already survived a decade—an extremely turbulent decade in the art market, and it will continue to survive and thrive. The one thing I can say for sure is that the contemporary art fair will be here in five years and will continue to remain strong and engaging, bringing communities of artists, curators, collectors and visitors together under the same roof.