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[Venues](#)
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Interview

Art Rabbit interviews Helen Allen, Director of Pulse Art Fair which makes its London debut in October

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by [Beth Greenacre](#)



Talia Keinan, Untitled, 2007, courtesy Noga Gallery of Contemporary Art

Art Rabbit: Helen, this is the first time that the Pulse art fair is to take place in London; what attracted you to the city?

Helen Allen: There are many things that attracted us to London. We have always wanted to do a show in London, but felt that it was important that we grow the brand steadily and not expand too quickly. This year – the timing was right and we didn't want to miss an opportunity in what has quickly become an international art world destination.

AR: What is the basic ethos of Pulse, particularly in relation to emerging art?

HA: PULSE is aimed at bridging the gap between the larger 'main' fairs and the alternative fairs. Our galleries range from one year to 30 years in existence – but all are committed to showing emerging talent. Some of the more established galleries including those who show at shows such as Art Basel opt to show their more emerging programs in Pulse. Visitors – be they curators or collectors have commented since the Fair's inception that they are always pleased to make new discoveries at our show.

AR: Why Mary Ward House; it is a beautiful building and an unusual one for an art fair, how it will impact on the fair?

HA: Mary Ward House was selected for a variety of reasons – one of the most important factors in deciding to go with this venue is its central location. It is an unusual and delightful space and is enabling us to try a different approach to our typical exhibitions with the linear aisles. One of the great things about this venue is that there is a constant source of discovery as you enter each room or turn down a new hallway.

AR: How does Pulse position itself in relation to Frieze, as well as the other London fairs (Zoo, Year 07, etc)? Are there any difficulties in bringing a new fair to a city with so many art events?

HA: PULSE is an invitational fair – that is to say that the exhibitors are invited by the committee. I think the main thing that will make us stand out from the other shows this year is that we have a strong international reputation (as a result of our history in Miami and New York) and the format of the fair collector and visitor – friendly and is tight and focused which is due in part to our more intimate scale. Like Frieze we have a strong commitment to showing works from all over the world and our exhibitors hail from the US, Europe and Asia.

AR: How big is the fair and from where do most of the exhibitors come?

HA: PULSE LONDON has 43 exhibitors. The exhibitors range from Beijing to Tokyo, Tel Aviv to Italy and 23 hailing from the US! As an American fair organization coming over to London – we felt that in our inaugural year we would offer collectors and Londoners a slightly different taste of the contemporary market.

AR: Do you anticipate the London fair being a different experience from your successful events in New York and Miami?

HA: It will be a different experience both because of its more intimate scale, its layout and the fact that it is our first event in London. We are very much looking forward to it.

AR: Is there anything you are particularly looking forward to at the fair?

HA: Being in London!!! Actually – I am excited about London as the Committee selected 14 galleries that will be showing with PULSE for the first time – so it will be great to have the opportunity to work with these new galleries.

AR: What about other events during the week in London; anything you can recommend?

HA: It seems that there is NO shortage of fabulous events going on that week. The BFI and the Hayward on the South Bank have some fabulous exhibitions planned

AR: The New York Magazine recently pitched London against New York where you are based, do you see Britain's capital city as an art rival?

HA: I think that the art market is constantly evolving and in a state of flux. While I think there is a tremendous amount of energy in London – the majority of the collectors are still American and – in speaking with many of my UK gallery friends – it appears that the majority of their sales are still to US based buyers. So – yes – I think in many ways the London art scene may be more vibrant from an artistic perspective (at the moment) – but the day to day market is still centralized in the US.

AR: Do you have plans to expand the fair beyond the UK and US?

HA: Never say never... but not anytime soon. I really believe we have to focus our energy now on building the brand and the visitors' experience at the show. We are working on several exciting proposals and hope to be able to unveil them in Miami.

AR: Any tips for Art Rabbit readers for getting the most out of their visit to Pulse this year?

HA: Come and enjoy... and if you get hungry – don't run off – we have a lovely garden café!

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