



SCOPE Art Fair founder Alexis Hubshman and its director Mollie White in the 30,000-square-foot temporary pavilion built for the event.

# Moving Against The Competition

*An Art Fair Goes Where the Action Is*

BY KIMBERLY CHOU

Alexis Hubshman, the founder of the SCOPE Art Fair, has moved the annual New York edition of the event, which begins Wednesday, to a new space on West 57th Street and 12th Avenue, a site he said he's eyed for years.

How much does the move have to do with the more widely recognized Armory Show operating just down the street at Piers 92 and 94?

Said Mr. Hubshman: "All of it."

He couched the move from SCOPE's previous Chelsea location in logistical terms, too, as well as simple business sense.

"There's nowhere else with 30,000 square feet, nowhere else to build a fair of that scale," he said. "There weren't a lot of choices but there's no doubt that I wanted convenience for the collector."

Of course, being across the street from the Armory Show isn't just about calculation—at least, not all about it. "Frankly," Mr. Hubshman said, "we were the first of the satellite fairs and we don't pretend we are anything else. There's now 50 other ones getting as close as they possibly can."

For its 11th New York edition, SCOPE has erected a temporary 30,000-square-foot pavilion—designed by Mr. Hubshman, an artist and self-described "failed architect"—on a large empty lot owned by the Durst Organization. (Durst aims to begin construction on a new residential building on the lot "in late April or early May," according its director of external affairs, Jordan Barowitz.)

Mr. Hubshman had set his sights on the space after driving by it a few years ago, when there was an old neon-sign-making building that had been converted into an artist residency space by chasama, an art organization that temporarily inhabits vacant properties. Chasama is run by Anita Durst, the daughter of Durst Organization president Douglas Durst. The Durst Organization allowed SCOPE to use the lot. In exchange, SCOPE donated roughly \$20,000 to chasama and will give it a booth at the fair, Mr. Hubshman said. He added that it costs about \$850,000 to mount the fair, which this year includes leveling the lot and building the pavilion.

Reached for comment, Ms. Durst said there was "not much" convincing required to get her

father to agree to let an art fair use the lot. "He sees the positive aspect of that," she said.

As for the Armory Show, which kicks off Thursday, the fair's organizers said they don't view SCOPE's move to within a few hundred meters away as overtly competitive.

"We are pleased that there is such an excellent concentration of cultural events throughout New York during Armory Arts Week," said Noah Horowitz, the Armory Show's managing director. "SCOPE's new location further demonstrates how the Armory Show is very much at the center of this activity."

**SCOPE has erected a 30,000-foot pavilion, right across the street from the Armory Show.**

SCOPE's new home is only the most visible element of an overhaul of both brand and business. The fair was launched 10 years ago with a mission to support emerging galleries. But during the art market's recent peak years, between 2006-08, it began to emphasize growing rather than refining the business, Mr. Hubshman said, joking about his onetime ambition to have an art fair in every small town as "SCOPElahoma." The quality of the shows—and the fair's reputation in the art community—suffered.

"We started doing much bigger fairs, doing more fairs than we really should do—four, five, sometimes even six a year," Mr. Hubshman said, referring to SCOPE fairs in Miami, London, Los Angeles and the Hamptons, as well as New York, Miami and Basel. "That spread us a little thin. I think we were more focused on generating revenue than focusing on allowing the quality to shine through in terms of programming. It's cool when you grow up and grow up into yourself, as opposed to being something that you're not."

This year there will be 60 exhibitors at the fair, down from about 80 in peak years (and more than 100 in Miami).

"I think part of the growing up and the rebrand, too, was just, it was time," said Mollie White, SCOPE's show director. "Part of coming back to our roots is coming back to quality."