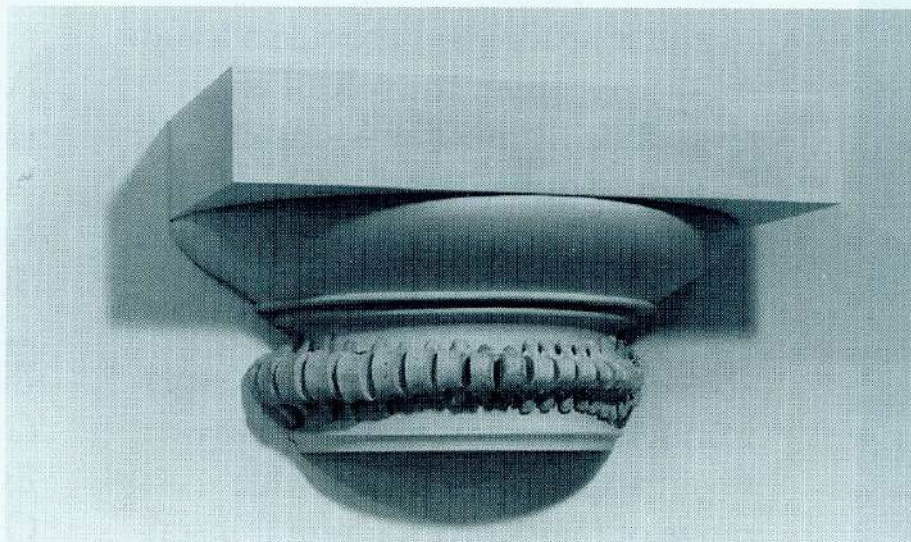
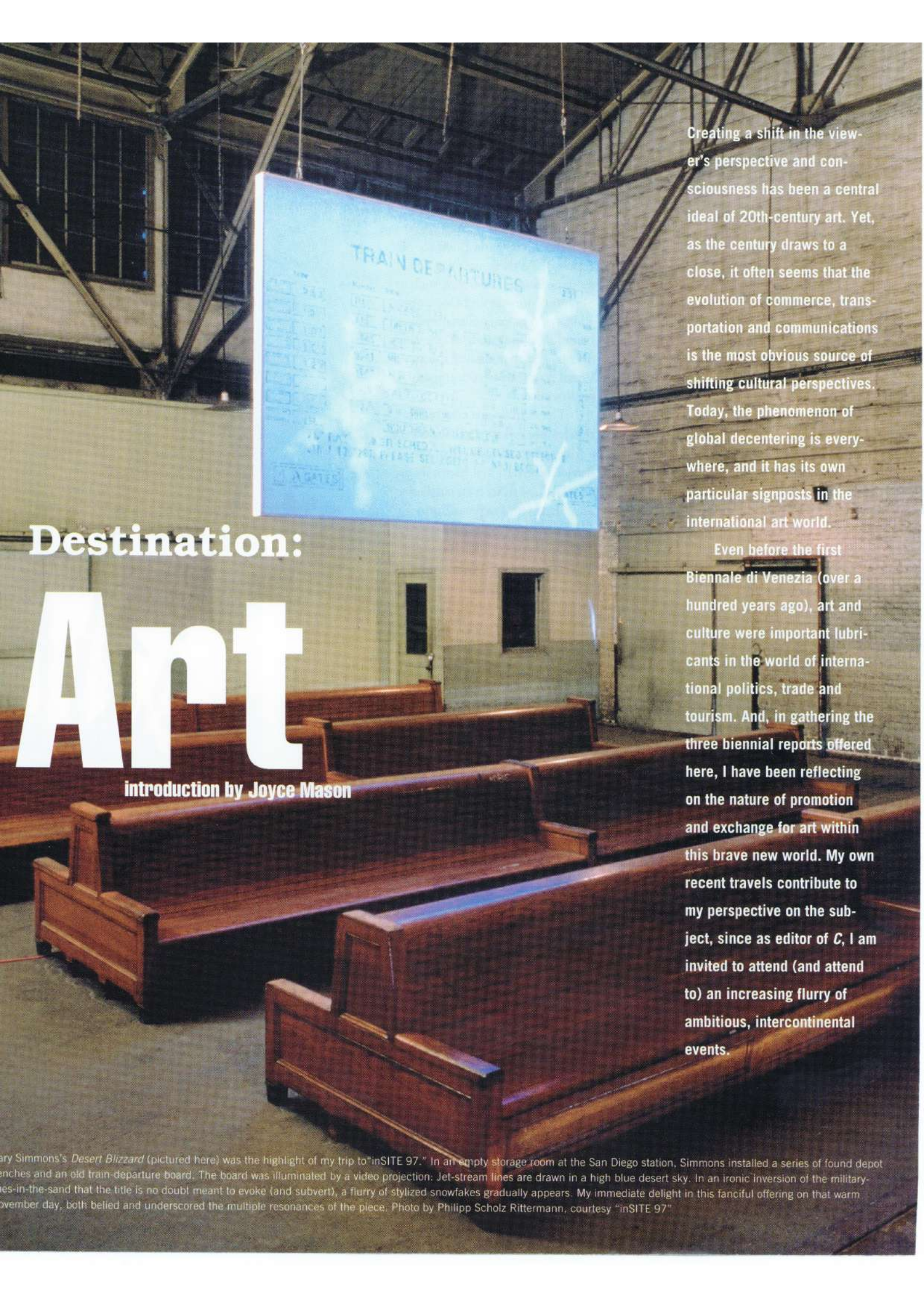


**Coming this Fall:**

**inSITE97**, subtitled “new projects in public spaces by artists of the americas” will be installed in the border cities of San Diego and Tijuana (Sept. 26–Nov. 30) / the second **Kwangju Biennial** in Korea (Sept. 1–Nov. 27) / the series of public artworks unveiled in fall called **Trois fois trois paysages** at Centre Vu / two photo biennials: **Le mois de la photo** in Montreal (Sept. 4–Oct. 15) and **Utopia/Dystopia** (Sept. 27–Oct. 25) mounted by Floating Gallery in Winnipeg.







Destination:

# Art

introduction by Joyce Mason

Creating a shift in the viewer's perspective and consciousness has been a central ideal of 20th-century art. Yet, as the century draws to a close, it often seems that the evolution of commerce, transportation and communications is the most obvious source of shifting cultural perspectives. Today, the phenomenon of global decentering is everywhere, and it has its own particular signposts in the international art world.

Even before the first Biennale di Venezia (over a hundred years ago), art and culture were important lubricants in the world of international politics, trade and tourism. And, in gathering the three biennial reports offered here, I have been reflecting on the nature of promotion and exchange for art within this brave new world. My own recent travels contribute to my perspective on the subject, since as editor of *C*, I am invited to attend (and attend to) an increasing flurry of ambitious, intercontinental events.

ary Simmons's *Desert Blizzard* (pictured here) was the highlight of my trip to "inSITE 97." In an empty storage room at the San Diego station, Simmons installed a series of found depot benches and an old train-departure board. The board was illuminated by a video projection: Jet-stream lines are drawn in a high blue desert sky. In an ironic inversion of the military-planes-in-the-sand that the title is no doubt meant to evoke (and subvert), a flurry of stylized snowflakes gradually appears. My immediate delight in this fanciful offering on that warm November day, both belied and underscored the multiple resonances of the piece. Photo by Philipp Scholz Rittermann, courtesy "inSITE 97"

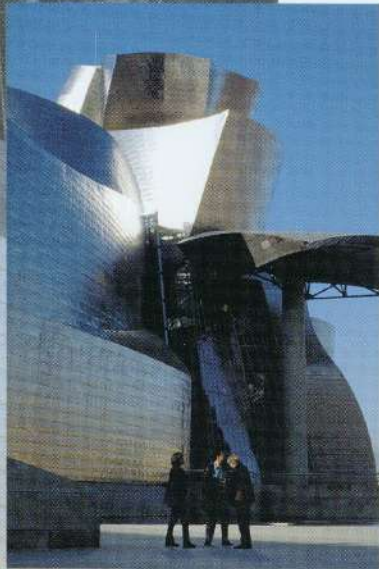




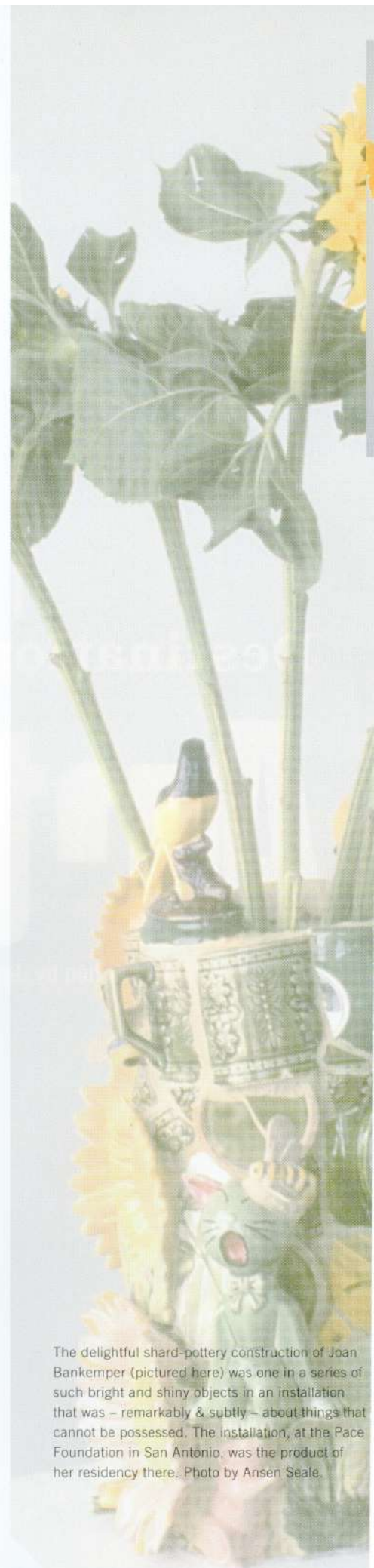
Among the plethora of international exhibitions, there were thirteen biennials world-wide in 1997 and (with Montreal weighing in this year) nine in 1998. Next year, Melbourne will join the circuit, providing Australia with its second exhibition (in alternating years with the 25-year-old Biennale of Sydney). To these we must add more occasional offerings, such as Skulptur Münster and Documenta, a mass of regional and national biennials, a multitude of one-time events, and the ongoing international programs of contemporary art institutes.

The exhibitions covered in this feature reflect three aspects of a wider phenomenon: first, the novice international Biennale de Montréal, with its own particular aspirations and expectations; second, a more regionally specific Alberta Biennial, which nonetheless exhibits an inevitable international consciousness; and finally, the most recent Bienal de São Paulo, which in this (its 24th) incarnation bears witness to the

value of a unique perspective in an increasingly worldly context. From the local survey to the international mega-show, the context is one where individual cities and art communities are constructing the institutions and events that will vie for the attention of artists, critics, curators and collectors. The impulse is to get and stay on the map and there are many roads to that end.



Of recent architectural monuments to contemporary art, Frank Gehry's spectacular Guggenheim Museum (pictured here) has transformed the industrial city of Bilbao, Spain into a major art-world destination. Others, including Helsinki's newly opened Kiasma Museum, provide an opportunity to invite new and renewed interest in local artists. Photo by Joyce Mason.



The delightful shard-pottery construction of Joan Bankemper (pictured here) was one in a series of such bright and shiny objects in an installation that was – remarkably & subtly – about things that cannot be possessed. The installation, at the Pace Foundation in San Antonio, was the product of her residency there. Photo by Ansen Seale.





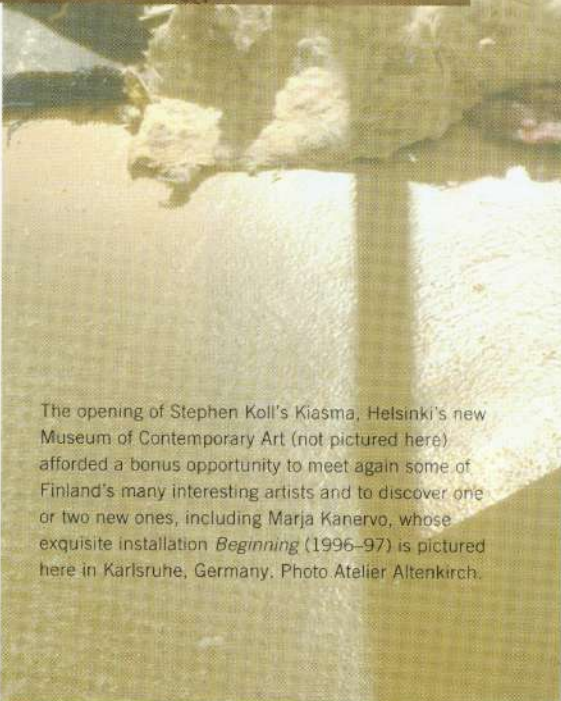
#### Via the building

Witness the transformation of Spain's northern steel-town Bilbao (a city previously without status in most official tourism guides) into an architectural and art-world mecca with the opening of the Guggenheim; Helsinki followed with its own new museum of contemporary art. (The sites – and the architects – of these two museums have produced interestingly different results. But more on that some other time.)

#### Via the outside curator

Inviting outside curators provides a shift from local perspectives and the possibility of long-term spin-offs. In the past year, for the Vancouver exhibition "Browser" (the 1997 incarnation of Artropolis), British curator Andrew Renton was invited to join the Vancouver-based Kitty Scott in producing this survey exhibition of local art production (See C #54, [www.CMagazine.com](http://www.CMagazine.com)). The resulting innovative curatorial attempt met with dismay among some local artists and interest from many outsiders. (Its organizing principle will be adopted by the Tate in London for an upcoming exhibition.)

In the quintessential border towns of San Diego & Tijuana, "inSITE 97" brought together curators from beyond the local border (Canada's Jessica Bradley, Brazil's Ivo Mesquita) to join perspectives



The opening of Stephen Koll's *Kiasma*, Helsinki's new Museum of Contemporary Art (not pictured here) afforded a bonus opportunity to meet again some of Finland's many interesting artists and to discover one or two new ones, including Marja Kanervo, whose exquisite installation *Beginning* (1996-97) is pictured here in Karlsruhe, Germany. Photo Atelier Altenkirch.

with Olivier Debroise of Mexico and American Sally Yard, providing a tri-continental, north-south exploration. For "inSITE," of course, the fact of international curators was part and parcel of the *raison d'être* of the exhibition. Curators and artists alike provided a spectacular and subtle range of responses to the idea and reality of the border.

#### Via the institution

From contemporary galleries to private foundations, institutions that specialize in regular, changing international exhibitions of contemporary art are our daily bread in most major centres.

#### Via the personal contact

First there are the destinations and finally there are those we find there. Works by artists discovered en route (whether in Kwangju, Helsinki or San Antonio) provide a foundation for future connections. The Pace Foundation in San Antonio seems to have recognized this fact in its very structure – offering working residencies to six artists at a time (two from Texas, two from elsewhere in the USA and two from outside the country). The Foundation provides a context for the personal connections out of which other things may happen. Meanwhile, by exhibiting works produced during the residencies, it fulfils the function of more traditional institutions – educating a local audience and expanding the local frame of reference.

In the plethora of strategies for survival and influence, it is rarely enough to serve up the latest fare from an internationally approved A-list of artists. Increasingly, we want to know why here? why now? what can this place offer to our ongoing consideration of art in the world?