



Germaine Koh
Photographs from *Sightings*
series

TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Photograph found 17 May 1993,
41 Street at Dyer Avenue,
New York

Photograph found 13 December
1992, west side of 5 Avenue
at 66 Street, New York

One of three photographs found
September 1995, Guigues Street
between Dalhousie and
Cumberland Streets, Ottawa

MIDDLE ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
One of 38 photographs found
29 December 1995, east side
of King Edward Avenue between
York and Clarence Streets,
Ottawa

One of 33 photographs found
June 1993, north-east corner
of 11 Street and Avenue B,
New York

Photograph found 11 March
1996, corner of York and
Cumberland Streets, Ottawa

BOTTOM ROW,
LEFT TO RIGHT:
Photograph found October
1992, Astor Place at Broadway,
New York

One of two photographs found
2 December 1994, Dalhousie
Street at George Street, Ottawa

One of six photographs found
14 December 1993, 34 Street
between 6 and 7 Avenues,
New York

Germaine Koh
LEFT: *Sightings*
Installation at YYZ
Artist's Outlet 1998

Sydney, September, 1998—Canadian Germaine Koh is one of the crowd in the midst of the most ferocious of art events, the Sydney international biennale. Typically characterized by overwhelming visual spectacle and a liberal sprinkling of ham-fisted banality, such events are a bit like the Tom Hanks's film *Big*, in which an adult body harbours the mind of a twelve-year-old. High curatorial ambitions are on the line, claims staked on new terrain. For any artist, it's a rough ride.

At the biennale in 1998, Koh was everywhere, and nowhere. She placed a stack of standard white business cards (with no business identification) in a plexi holder beside the public telephone in a gallery lobby; two bags of buttons, one blue

and one green, were placed between the men's and women's washrooms; brief and poetic cryptic inserts appeared in the "Public Notices" section of *The Sydney Morning Herald*; dyspeptically common postcards were installed in a display rack; and there was more.

If such high understatement makes Koh an unlikely candidate for international art status, her work is hardly minor or self-contained. She has created a practice imbued with ethical questions and propositions that appear to seep from the edges of day-to-day activity rather than being theatrical pronouncements of theoretical positions. As Sydney writer Charles Green noted, Koh understands the challenge of "how not to make art."