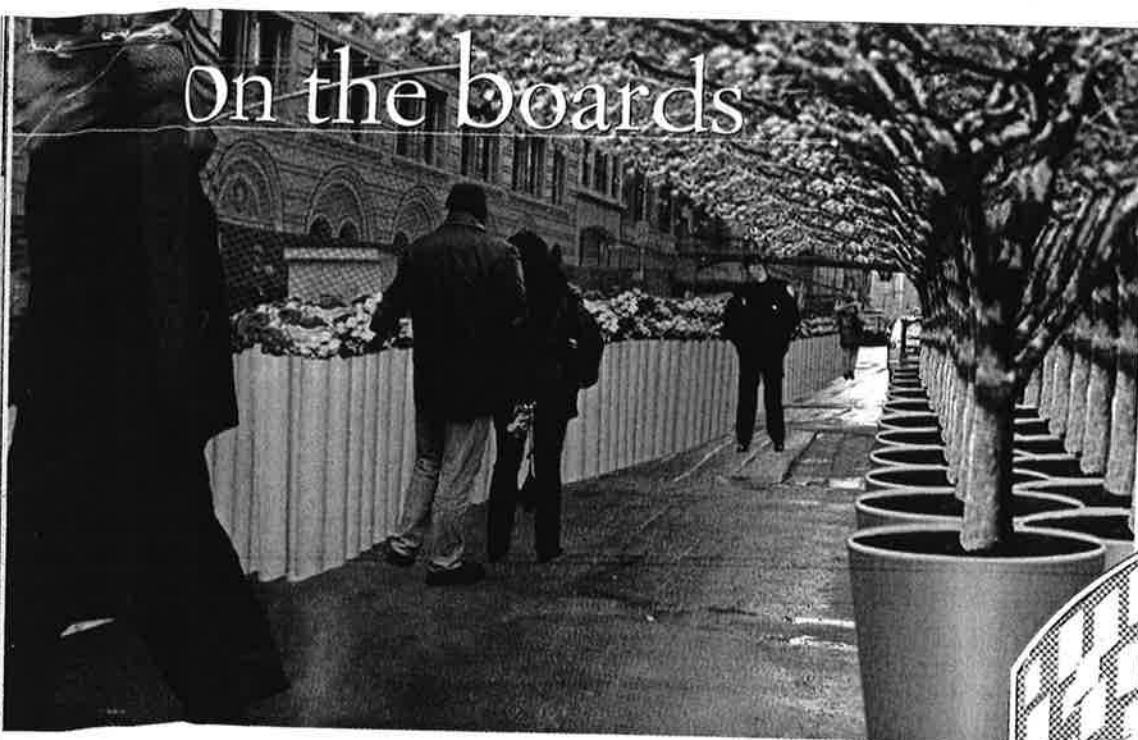


# on the boards



business interests, and developers," says Miss. The design team sees the movement of people toward the epicenter of the disaster site as a reversal of the physical and mental fragmentation caused by the explosions and subsequent collapse of the towers.

"The design is made up of a system of modular elements, because we don't

## A Moving Perimeter

*Local designers seek to harness the emotion and attraction of the public drawn to the site of the World Trade Center disaster, transforming the barriers into a living edge.*

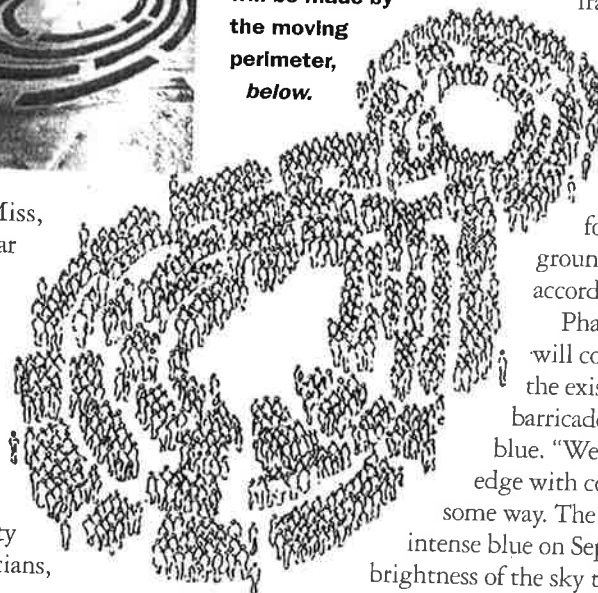
BY HEATHER HAMMATT,  
ASLA

**T**housands of people from around the world have made the pilgrimage to ground zero, the former site of the World Trade Center towers in New York City, to participate in the grieving and healing process, or just to experience firsthand the harsh reality of the desolation of this once-vibrant urban landscape. The accessible perimeter of ground zero shifts and contracts constantly. "Everyone comes to the edge to get as close as they can. It seems important to transform that edge into a place where people can come and pay tribute," says Mary Miss, a nationally known environmental artist and 30-year resident of the Tribeca neighborhood of New York.

After personally experiencing the reverberation of the September 11 tragedy with a studio full of toxic dust and a neighborhood in ruins, Miss joined forces with local landscape architects Elliot Maltby and Victoria Marshall to create a design proposal that recognizes and celebrates the site's attractive force. "I feel that it is very important that artists be able to participate in the recovery of our city and that it not be left solely in the hands of politicians,



**Blue modular elements, top, and undulating steel mesh fencing, above, will become part of the interactive ritual of remembrance, while figure eights painted on the streetscape, left, symbolize the connection of people and place that will be made by the moving perimeter, below.**



really know what the shape of the site will end up being," says Miss. The design for the "moving perimeter" stresses the importance of maintaining a visual connection between the public and the recovery and reconstruction process. Rather than a partition that hides the site or the flat barrier of a chain-link fence, the design will maintain a permeable edge with undulating steel mesh on a pipe frame. Visitors will be able to participate, if only through observation, with the physical reclamation of the urban landscape, transforming the scarred ground into a sacred site, according to Miss.

Phase one of the project will consist of painting all the existing barriers, fences, barricades, and scaffolding blue. "We wanted to mark the edge with color to set it apart in some way. The sky was the most intense blue on September 11. The brightness of the sky that day is something

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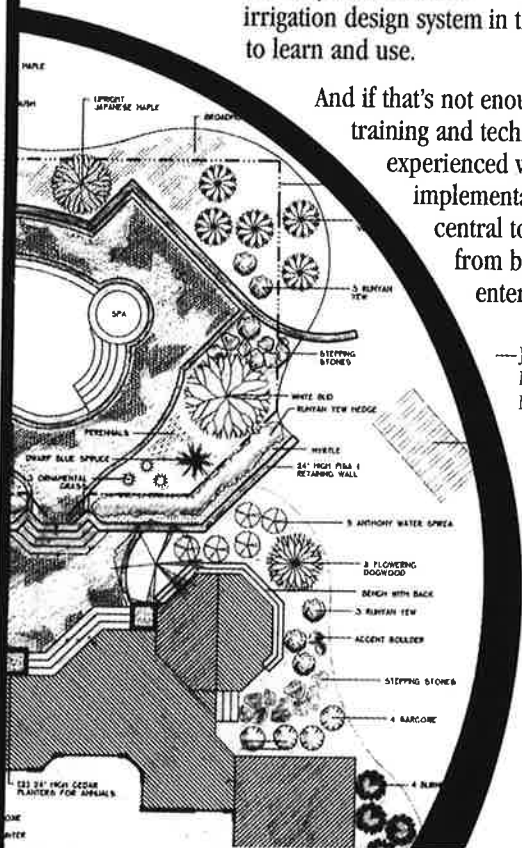
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that people won't forget," says Miss. The color blue becomes a unifying element for the flexible, modular design. Groups of flowering trees in blue planters will border the perimeter of the site, where space allows, with the idea that some of the trees may be incorporated permanently into the site design at the end of the reconstruction process. Plastic pipe, painted blue, will be strung together to create flexible partitions, replacing the standard police barriers. The ends of the pipes will be left open to provide receptacles for flowers and candles, becoming part of the ritual of remembrance. Circular blue seating elements will be arranged along the perimeter, providing places to stop, rest, and reflect. Cylindrical frames of wire mesh, lit from the base, will illuminate special areas along the edge, in addition to small blue lights that will accentuate the perimeter at night.

For the short term, Miss and fellow designers fear the possibility that the site will become touristy, attracting street vendors and detracting from the experience of visitors. "We wanted to keep in mind the meaning of the place," says Miss. The pattern created by bands of blue objects, flower offerings, and lit candles, combined with the movement of people around the perimeter, will create a living wreath.

This moving perimeter, or connection of people and place, will be symbolized with the form of a figure eight, which will be painted in blue at prominent intersections throughout the site. "An infinite line seemed an appropriate symbol for the coming back together that we hope to see happen," says Miss.

"There are no guarantees that this [design] will be implemented," says Miss, who continually meets with the various agencies and people who have control over the site and its future. "The decision-making process is up in the air about how the site will be rebuilt and what kind of [permanent] memorial will be constructed. An organization called New York Cares has agreed to supply volunteers to paint our 3/4-mile blue perimeter. But first, we need the weather to be above freezing." **LA**