

CREATIVE SPACES

A TOUR OF INNOVATIVE WORKPLACES



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID WHITTAKER

Deloitte's zebra wood-lined boardroom at its refurbished national office in Toronto's financial district features oil-and-pastel paintings of Canadian cities by Canadian artist John Hartman. On display here are St. John's, left, and Vancouver.

A rich palette tells the tale of Canada's cities

DELOITTE'S NEW OFFICE

Artist commissioned to capture the flavour of Canada

BY SARAH TRELEAVEN

When accounting firm Deloitte refurbished its five-storey national office in Toronto's financial district, the firm wanted to display art that would reflect its presence across the country. John Kelly, of interior design firm Kelly McTernan Lavoie, who managed the renovation, proposed a series by prominent Canadian artist John Hartman.

What Deloitte commissioned Hartman to complete a large series of cityscapes to cover the geographic spectrum from Newfoundland to British Columbia, including Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa and

Calgary. In a statement that accompanies the work, Hartman asks the viewer to imagine that they are "flying above each city looking down at the urban landscape" and tempts one to locate their "familiar world." Hartman completed 12 works in oils and pastels, more than the initial commission, but all of which were purchased and mounted by Deloitte.

Standouts Paintings of St. John's and Vancouver were selected for Deloitte's massive zebra wood-lined boardroom in order to create a sense of national cohesiveness from coast to coast. St. John's is the smaller of the two, and offers a warm perspective on the city nestled in a rocky cove and captured in pinkish tones. The painting of Vancouver is a view from the North shore, and the city centre is dwarfed by sky, sea, mountains and criss-crossing multi-colour highways. Both works are representational but abstract with rich and varying colour palettes of browns, reds, pinks, greys, purples and blues. "I'm always trying to catch a sense of the light in a specific place," says Hartman.

Where Seven pieces transform

what could have been an otherwise unremarkable corridor from reception to the boardroom. Mr. Kelly says favourites vary, but people can't walk by without trying to knit their world together. "I can't tell you the number of people who have pointed out to me where they went to high school or where their first house was," he says.

How Hartman had five months to complete the commission. His deadline was the spring 2009 completion of the office renovation. For some cities, like Toronto, he already had preliminary sketches and photographs he could work from. For others, Hartman travelled to the city, rented planes or helicopters to fly over and take pictures. He also explored each location on foot to make sketches.

Why Deloitte's aim was to reach out to its extended partnership and client base. Mr. Kelly says they sought to showcase the vitality of the country and the importance of Canadian cities to how Deloitte does business. "When a partner comes to visit from Saskatoon," he says, "they're proud to see that piece on the wall."

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