

ENGINE GALLERY Group show, to  
Sat. 1112 Queen W. 647-430-7960.  
✕ FLY GALLERY Closed for Renova-

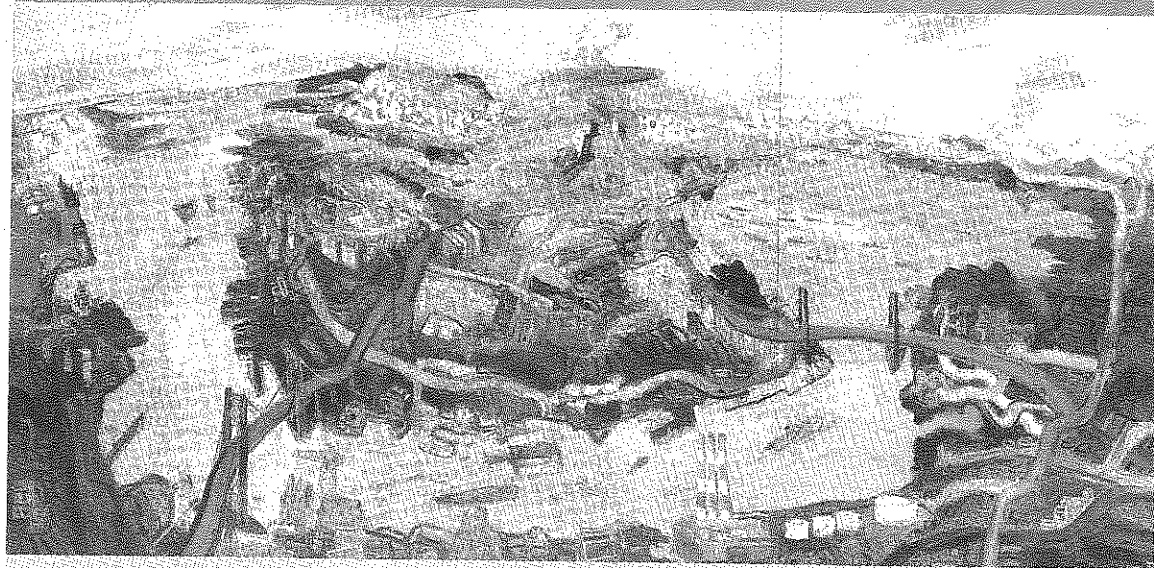
★ SIDE SPACE GALLERY The Street:  
group. Mar 2-Apr 4. 1080 St Clair W.



Complete listings online at  
EYEWEKLY.COM/ARTS

## EYE CANDY

BY DAVID BALZER



### John Hartman "Cities"

Stephen Harper should really see "Cities," the excellent John Hartman exhibit at the University of Toronto Art Centre. No other aesthetic argument need be made for the importance of Canadian urbanity; to stand in front of Hartman's paintings (in the right mood, of course) is to feel the surprising sublimity of such subjects as Vancouver, Halifax and even towns like Port Severn, Parry Sound and Owen Sound. Granted, Hartman is interested in that very un-Harper of phenomena, the port city, which Hartman eyes as a visceral, mythic thing: a collection of buildings and bridges and docks opening up to the world, and thus constantly confirming the hoary figurative association between the city and the heart. A good, but confounding, exercise is to attempt a compare-and-contrast: what makes Hartman's views of Glasgow different than his views of

New York, and then of the Canadian cities? If sheer scale (or, perhaps, nationalism) is the only factor then Halifax and Vancouver, both of which receive the massive triptych treatment, seem the most glorious. But there is a sameness here that seems just as significant. Hartman is playing with the perpetual tourist's dilemma: how to get a real sense of a place, to come closest to being able to box it up and hold it in your hand? By assuming an impossibly high-angle, aerial perspective, Hartman suggests that such an urge is powerful, possible, but ultimately useless. His spectacular Halifax, for instance, is most memorable as a purple, pink, and red Shangri-La: one that makes more room for history — and for the artist's intrusive, sometimes spastic brush — than for cartographic accuracy. It's a satisfying anti-parochialism; Hartman's Halifax could, in a sense, be anywhere.

JOHN HARTMAN'S "CITIES" RUNS TO MAR 15. TUE-FRI NOON-5PM; SAT NOON-4PM. UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ART CENTRE, 15 KING'S COLLEGE CIRCLE. 416-978-1838. WWW.UTAC.UTORONTO.CA.