

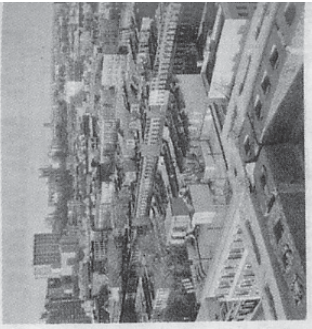
TODAY'S WEATHER Snow, 3-6 inches total. High 36° DETAILS ON P. 2

S&P 500 1,291.24 ▲ 10.58 (+0.83%) / NASDAQ 2,314.64 ▲ 33.25 (+1.46%) / GOLD 565.80 ▲ 1.90 (+0.33%)



The

Sun



Baseball Classic Preview, pp. 20-21

Real Estate Market Rate Housing Comes to Harlem, p. 2

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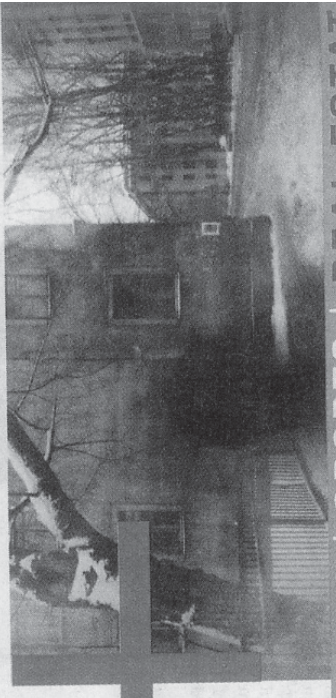
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ARTS

The photographs of Alexey Titarenko, Page 15



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THE NEW YORK SUN

ARTS & LETTERS

By WILLIAM MEYERS

Cities attract photographers like courtesans attract lovers. Paris and New York have probably inspired the largest number of suitors — each smitten shutterbug expressing his passion with the click of his camera — but other cities have their swains. Currently, the Candace Dwan and Nailya Alexander Galleries have combined forces in an inaugural joint exhibition, “Northern Light,” that features work by two photographers devoted to two cities situated at about 60 degrees north latitude. (New York is 40 degrees 29 minutes north latitude.) Alexey Titarenko’s “St. Petersburg Series” and Pentti Sarmallahti’s “Helsinki” are both ardent in their grappling with the objects of their attention, but — to conclude this analogy before it becomes obscene — as different as two disparate beaux wooing two disparate maids.

NORTHERN LIGHT

Candace Dwan & Nailya Alexander Galleries

Helsinki is the starred capital at the southern tip of the map of Finland. It has little reality to me beyond that, so Mr. Sarmallahti’s pictures are a revelation. Another picture of the Eiffel Tower or the Empire State Building would be compared to prior photos of those monuments, but Helsinki for me is only as Mr. Sarmallahti presents it. Not surprisingly, it is cold, with ice and snow an important part of many of the images. The buildings are austere, classical, and precise and made of brick or granite. There are few people about, solitary dogs, and isolated birds. The people who are there seem weathered. There is a crystalline charm.

Mr. Sarmallahti (b. 1950) is a miniaturist or, at least, he has chosen to print his black-and-white negatives in a relatively small size, mostly about 4 inches by 5 inches. The pleasure of successful large prints like the ones I saw last week that were 96 inches across is that you stand back and view them like a landscape, craning your head from left to right and back again. The pleasure of small prints is that they draw you in: You stand there with your nose not far from the wall and your eyeballs carefully picking out the details. Mr. Sarmallahti’s pictures reward such careful scrutiny: They can be comprehended at a glance, but not exhausted without extended viewing.

Alexey Titarenko was born in 1962, when St. Petersburg was still known as Leningrad. His black-and-white pictures from 1992 through 1999 show the city as Russian society was moving from the wreckage of communism into its still unresolved future. If Mr. Sarmallahti’s Helsinki exists in a placid timelessness, Mr. Titarenko’s St. Petersburg is beset with fretful anxiety. There is a sense of trauma.

Mr. Titarenko frequently uses a very long exposure so that buildings, trees, and other inanimate objects are sharp, but people are blurred. The citizens of his St. Petersburg are wraithlike figures, partially transparent, anonymous, in motion but headed toward dissolution. “Untitled (Stranger)” (1996) shows a solitary pedestrian on a snowy sidewalk on a street of buildings that look as if they house parts of the bureaucracy. The street and buildings are light gray, the pedestrian’s back a darker gray, but his legs and head and outline are too indistinct to have much reality. He is a being with movement, but without identity.

Mr. Titarenko’s untitled crowd photos use the same technique with large masses of people. In “Untitled (Crowd 4),” a blurred group ascends a long flight of steps outside a building. The only body parts that can be made out are the hands planted on the railing: The rest is just a melded sea of humanity, as characterless as a flock of sheep. The queue was one of the Soviet Union’s primary forms of social organization, and Mr. Titarenko memorializes it in these scarring images.

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