

News
to Print

The New York Times

Late Edition
New York: Today, clear,
sun, high 48. Tonight,
low 35. Tomorrow, cloudy
snow shower, high 46
54, low 34. Weather

No. 53,528

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NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2006

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24, 2006

WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS LEISURE

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2006

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Art in Review

'Northern Light'

Alexey Titarenko,
Pentti Sammallahti

Candace Dwan Gallery
Nailya Alexander Gallery
24 West 57th Street, Manhattan
Through April 1

Two Northern European photographers, Alexey Titarenko of St. Petersburg, Russia, and Pentti Sammallahti of Helsinki, Finland, salute their respective cities in this dual exhibition. Mr. Titarenko turned his camera on St. Petersburg as a boy, and never stopped shooting, before and after the collapse of the Soviet regime. Attuned to atmosphere rather than architecture, his poignant images — particularly of people — are often deliberately blurred, a metaphor for life's uncertainty. Dostoyevsky, still a haunting presence in the city, is at times Mr. Titarenko's inspiration in conveying its noirish aspects. In "Untitled (Stranger)" of 1996, two indistinct figures, seen through lines of slanting snow before a building lighted only by a basement window, make a scene right out of "Crime and Punishment."

Mr. Sammallahti's work is playful and lyrically intimate, making poetry from small visual surprises. A dog looks up at a string of balloons floating high in the air; three skinny trees in winter are almost rhymingly matched with three fat birds in the snow nearby; the shroud on a boat covered up against storms takes the form of a tall ghost; a man whose back is to the camera has the arms of an otherwise invisible woman wrapped around him. If the images here seem less particular to Helsinki than Mr. Titarenko's are to St. Petersburg, you still get a sense of a city treasured by its photographer.

GRACE GLUECK