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PHOTOGRAPHS | By William Meyers

A Master of Technique

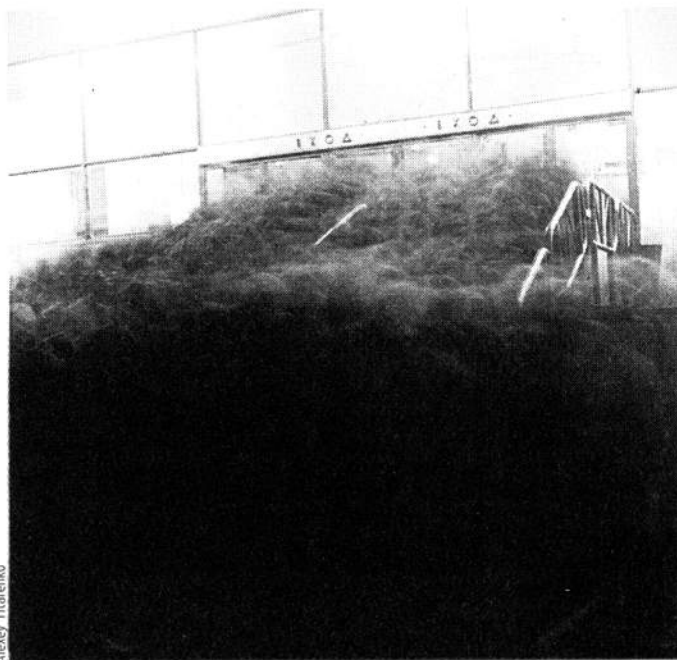
And other shows worth seeing in New York

New York

Alexey Titarenko:
Saint Petersburg
in Four Movements ▶
Nailya Alexander Gallery
41 E. 57th St., Suite 704
Through April 24

A blurred mass of what turns out to be people moves slowly up the stairs to the entrance of an office building. Alexey Titarenko created the illusion of movement in a still photograph by using an extremely slow shutter speed; the building is sharp because the camera was held steady on a tripod, but the heads and shoulders of the jostling crowd form a fuzzy agglomeration like a flock of sheep. Mr. Titarenko (born 1962) is a master of photographic technique, not only with his camera but also in the darkroom, where he produces exquisite prints—some delicately toned, all different. He began photographing his native St. Petersburg (called Leningrad then) at 15, when he was a member of Mirror, an underground photo club. The picture described, “#2 Untitled (Heads), 1992,” is from the City of Shadows section of “Saint Petersburg in Four Movements.” It was shot in the chaotic days after the fall of the Soviet Union, when, as has happened so often in Russian history, individuals lost their identities in a crowd.

In other sections Mr. Titarenko isolates individuals passing anonymously through the snowbound city, “#27 Untitled, 1997” and “#28 Untitled (Stranger), 1996,” or captures



Alexey Titarenko

the fragile beauty cast by the low winter sun, “#21 Untitled (Woman on the Corner), 1995.” Mr. Titarenko’s art, like that of Shostakovich, Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, all of whom he admires, is bound up with the suffering of the Russian people. His St. Petersburg is another “Unreal City” whose wraithlike inhabitants leave hardly a smudge where they’ve passed.

Artists See Artists II
Deborah Bell Photographs
511 W. 25th St., Room 703
Through March 27

There are two possible reasons that photographers’ portraits of artists, many also pho-

tographers, might be more interesting than portraits of less talented people: The subject artists could be physically more compelling than ordinary folk, or there might exist a special affinity between two people caught up in similar pursuits. Deborah Bell is exhibiting works by 30 photographers, both well-known and less well-known, of artists similarly spread across the spectrum of renown, allowing us to consider the two possibilities.

Walker Evans’s “Portrait of Berenice Abbott, 1930” substantiates the second possibility. Taken the year after Abbott returned from Europe, the pic-

ture concentrates on her large, wide-open eyes; she looks vulnerable and clutches at her collar as if for protection, but against what? Maybe the struggle to establish herself professionally in a New York stricken by the Depression. It seems a particularly intimate and revealing picture. John Coplans’s “Self-portrait (hands spread on knees), 1985” tests the first possibility: Coplans’s knees, the backs of his hands, even the backs of his fingers, are covered with fine, black hair. This is compelling, but probably not in a way unique to artists. Also up are David Armstrong’s “Nan in Stuyvesant Park, 1991” and Nan Goldin’s “Ethyl Eichelberger at Area, New York City, 1984,” László Moholy-Nagy’s “Lucia Moholy, ca. 1920” and Lucia Moholy’s “Florence Henri, 1927.” The artists take turns seeing and being seen.

Downtown Pix:
Mining the Fales Archives
1961-1991

Grey Art Gallery,
New York University
100 Washington Square E.
Through April 3

Greenwich Village was the epicenter of avant-garde American art for most of the 20th century, and the exhibition at the Grey Art Gallery documents the efforts, high jinks and AIDS-related deaths of NYU’s artistic neighbors over three fervid decades.

Robert Alexander’s simple dance photographs seem to capture his subjects’ intentions well, especially those of Trisha Brown, and of David Gordon and Valda Setterfield. Fred W. McDarragh, photojournalist for the Village Voice during this period, created an indispensable record of its artistic and political personalities. The gal-

lery displays highlights of his coverage of the gay-rights movement that began just a few blocks west. Robert Mapplethorpe’s pictures are predictably kitschy, but Andy Warhol’s Polaroid portraits are affecting, probably because they are so casual and lacking in pretension. Babette Mangolte documented Richard Foreman’s ongoing experiments in theatrical tedium, and, according to the wall text, Jimmy DeSana’s photo book “Submission” explored “sado-masochism with hyperbole and wit.” Looks uncomfortable to me.

W. Eugene Smith:
The Jazz Loft Project
New York Public Library
For the Performing Arts
40 Lincoln Center Plaza
Through May 22

W. Eugene Smith was a troubled man. He was always willing to recklessly endanger himself to get the shot he wanted. In 1957 he quit Life magazine over unhappiness with its editing of his pictures, and he left his wife and four children and their suburban home, moving into a cold-water flat in a mostly abandoned building at 821 Sixth Avenue, between 28th and 29th Streets. The building came to have four pianos available for the jazz musicians who congregated there at all hours and jammed, practiced and socialized. Smith loved music. He had catholic tastes and a collection of thousands of records: On assignments he traveled with records and a phonograph; when he sequestered himself in his darkroom for days at a time, he played music at nuisance-level volume as he worked. Over eight years, Smith took 40,000 photographs at 821 Sixth, about half of them

of the hundreds of jazz musicians who passed through the building at one time or other, and half of the street life outside its windows.

The exhibition at Lincoln Center features a generous selection of Smith’s vintage prints, and also of the 4,000 hours of audiotapes he recorded. If you love Thelonious Monk, Zoot Sims, Buck Clayton, Lee Konitz, Pee Wee Russell, Bob Brookmeyer, Jimmy Giuffre, Roland Kirk—that pantheon of greats I saw on summer nights at the Newport Jazz Festival and can still hear in memory—see this show.

Mr. Meyers is a writer and photographer living in New York.

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See a slideshow of photographs from these exhibitions at WSJ.com/Lifestyle.

Pepper ...
And Salt

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“Have a good weekend, Doug. And don’t forget to spring ahead one billable hour.”