

The High Line, New York City

by Tina Barry

Gansevoort Street

The 13-year-old model with soba noodle legs and palm-sized shorts turns her face to the makeup artist who dips a brush into shimmery powder and swipes it across the girl's cheeks. The girl feels the transformation, skinny Russian kid to a woman, a beautiful woman brought to life, eyes closed, head tilted back, sucking in the sun. She doesn't notice the small group of women in saris, emerald and garnet, sapphire and citrine, the cloth covered with mirrors glinting in the light. Or how they link plump brown arms, frightened or delighted by the attention, huddled close, bird-like chatter halted. A man on a bench holds his hands up, thumb to thumb, index finger to index finger to make a frame. Whoever spots him can picture what he sees: An Indian miniature, the clouds white anvils against blue, a static of brilliant tones in its center.

10th Avenue

A woman in a black T-shirt sequined with a giant gold cross and gold hot pants struts the stone path from 20th to 21st Streets as if it's her runway, while a D.J. plays a mixed tape of cricket chirps and car alarms.

Washington Street

The Standard Hotel opens over the High Line, a thousand panes of glass and little else. In one window a man pauses, then unwinds his towel and stands nude, celebrating his own beauty and that of a city where a young Orthodox couple sit close yet not touching and chat awkwardly, "Um, what's your favorite movie?" ignoring a sound

installation that plays behind them: Good animals: penguin, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, domestic house cat, dog, turtle. Bad animals: spider, bat, tapeworm, head lice, rats, cockroaches, shark.

