

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; Alec Soth

By **Holland Cotter**

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Yossi Milo Gallery

552 West 24th Street, Chelsea

Through April 24

The photographer Alec Soth works in an on-the-road narrative form that has a long history in American art and literature. The journey shaped in his Manhattan debut show, "Sleeping by the Mississippi," and in a handsome book with the same title, begins in wintry Minnesota, where he lives, and progresses down along the river to Louisiana, in pictures that have the grit of Robert Frank's "Americans" and the freakish normality of a Flannery O'Connor story.

In Mr. Soth's series, surreality starts in the North, with an image of a snowbound American Gothic-style houseboat and an outdoor shot of a bearded man in a pullover hood and a jumpsuit holding model fighter planes for the camera's inspection. A picture, taken at dawn or dusk in Wisconsin, of a hillside cemetery behind a brightly lighted gas station gets the trip moving geographically. More people appear: a construction worker named Lenny who moonlights as an erotic masseur; a Mississippi preacher's wife named Bonnie holding a photograph of an angel; Crystal, a transvestite, in a long blond wig and a little straw hat; and Frankie Jean, sister of Jerry Lee Lewis and custodian of his relics.

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