



Fun in the sun: Photographer Massimo Vitali's Pegli, West, 2000, shot outside Genoa.

>>NEW YORK CITY

## Scene Stealer

**📷** From his favored vantage point atop a 15-foot temporary platform, the Italian photographer Massimo Vitali shoots the places we go to to kick back, not by ourselves but while surrounded by others: beaches, discos, ski resorts, public gardens, swimming pools. The uninhibited results can be seen through April 10 in **"Massimo Vitali: Landscape with Figures,"** an exhibition of large-scale works at Bonni Benrubi Gallery on Manhat-

tan's Upper East Side (for those who can't make it, a book of the same title has been published by Steidl; \$80). Filled with individual stories, Vitali's images of modern leisure are as unsettling as they are beautiful. Shift your gaze slightly and documentary clarity suddenly transforms into the surreal. These photographs give a keen observer's view of what we look like when we're alone—in a crowd (212-517-3766; bonnibenrubi.com).

## LIFE

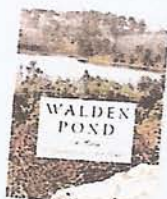
**Around the Bloc: My Life in Moscow, Beijing, and Havana**  
Stephanie Elizondo Griest  
VILLARD. \$14

Plucky young Texas journalist eager to see the world decides to make Communist countries (current and otherwise) her terrain. Adventures ensue: vodka-soaked parties in Moscow, a forbidden gay bar in Beijing, rumba sessions in Havana. It's a zesty



expedition through three wildly different cultures, each in strikingly similar predicaments.

**Walden Pond: A History**  
W. Barksdale Maynard  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. \$35  
In the century and a half since Henry David Thoreau made it a symbol of the simpler life, Walden Pond has nearly been loved to death by trampling tourists. Rescued only recently by conservationists, the once-



again sparkling waters are more alluring than ever, and this photo-filled history illustrates why.

**The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World**  
Lawrence Osborne  
NORTHPOINT PRESS. \$25  
Can wine connoisseurship transcend its own snob appeal? Osborne's trip through the grape-

growing regions of France, Italy, and California includes appearances by the brightest stars of the viticultural universe—the regal Piero Antinori, “godfather of Italian wine”; the jolly Charles Chevalier, of Château Lafite Rothschild; the genial Robert Mondavi, of Napa—all of whom he brings affectionately down to earth. Good taste in wine, as in all things, Osborne concludes, is simply “a talent for living life.”

