

# THE ROOFS OF ST. PETERSBURG

BY MARK SERMAN





# URBAN POETRY: ST. PETERSBURG—NEW YORK

The subtitle of Mark Serman's exhibit at the Harriman Institute (October 19–December 16, 2016) appeared to invite an aesthetic comparison of these two cities, which seemingly have nothing in common. And indeed, at first glance one sees little in common between the enormous metropolis on the Hudson River, which has undergone numerous architectural metamorphoses over the centuries, and the imperial capital on the Neva, which came into existence through the will of one person, a city that to this day bears many traces of his imagination and design. A closer examination, however, uncovers profound similarities established by the exhibit's title and subtitle: the photographer's keen eye provides us with visual series that share features rhythmically

or metaphorically, by means of camera angle, perspective or intonation, which ultimately lead to a complex game of associations characteristic for both poetry and any form of fine art.

In Serman's words, the exhibition reflects both periods of his work: the period of his pervading interest in cinematography when he worked as a cameraman for Lenfilm (the time when his photo-series "The Roofs of St. Petersburg" was created) and his more diverse artistic activity in emigration, when New York, one of the most contradictory cities in the world, became an important source of imagination. —Vasily Rudich

*Excerpted from "The City, Image and Eye of Photographer Mark Serman," published in Elegant New York (December 1, 2016).*

