

FUJILOVE

ALL THINGS FUJI X

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**Make time
for creativity**

by Ian MacDonald

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THE
STREETS
OF
ST PETERSBURG

Kevin Pilz

When Fujifilm released the X100F,
I had a feeling that this camera
would change my photography.
However, it changed me in ways
that I didn't expect.



X100F at f/5.6,
1/450 sec, ISO 200

A fixed-lens camera might be a deal-breaker for many people. But for me, the camera's limitations mean absolute freedom, which helps me to foster my creativity and to enhance my vision. Today, I do not have to decide on which lenses to bring anymore. The 35mm focal length already feels so natural to me that I even see the picture before I raise the camera to my eye. Soon after I acquired the X100F, my trusty X-T1 started collecting dust. Before I went to St. Petersburg, I made the decision to just bring my X100F. This would guarantee to allow me to test and thoroughly check my new camera during the trip.

I work as an engineer for a big German company and my job includes regular travel. This sometimes

leads me to countries or cities I wouldn't have put on my bucket list. I consider myself a street photographer so I am lucky that I am able to combine photography with my job. In summer 2017, a colleague of mine and I were commissioned to travel to St Petersburg in Russia for a business-related workshop. This trip was scheduled for the first week of July. Exploring a city centre within a week is almost impossible, and what's more is the fact that we would have to work until late each day. Thus, my photographic ambitions would be condensed to a short time-window in the evenings. I regarded these circumstances as a challenge, since I wanted to see as much as possible from this city.

St Petersburg: the city of the tsars or, as some may call it, the Venice of the North. St Petersburg is Russia's second largest city after Moscow. Situated on the Neva River, it was founded in 1703 by Tsar Peter the Great. Later, the city was improved and refined by Peter's successors, who hired European architects to build cathedrals and palaces. Over time, the city grew and became Romanov's showcase capital. In 1914, the city's name was changed from St Petersburg to Petrograd. A little later, as a consequence of the revolution, the city lost its status as Russia's capital in favor of Moscow. In 1924, the city's name was again changed to Leningrad but, finally, in 1991, the city was given back its original name of St Petersburg. The renaming process alone is an indication of the revolutionary spirit of this city, which can also be

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considered Russia's cultural capital. Its historic city centre constitutes a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Furthermore, it is the home of the world-famous Hermitage museum. You can literally spend days in this museum, seeing everything from ancient Egyptian history to DaVinci drawings. There are so many things St Petersburg is famous for, that it would fill pages to name them all.

X100F at f/4, 1/125 sec, ISO 2500





X100F at f/2, 1/125 sec, ISO 800

The best travel time might be summer, since the 'Summer White Nights' in St Petersburg are legendary. Between May and June, the Northern sun never fully sets. During the White Nights, a sheer magical light covers the city in the evenings. For me, it felt as if the golden hour lasted three hours every day. So we'd been in St Petersburg at just the right time of year. I truly was lucky, as I only had time to shoot the streets in the evenings.

In preparation for this trip, I took care only of the business part. I also informed my colleague about my after-work plans and he decided he would join me in order to explore the city. Furthermore, I decided against reading anything specific about St

Petersburg and its people. For me, it is important to experience a city and its people unbiased, as I want to perceive my surroundings with open eyes. Since I would be short on time, I planned on avoiding the typical 'me-too' pictures, where one would visit only the most famous sites and take some snapshots. Therefore, I felt a local guide would be of great help to get to see many non-touristy places. Through social media, I knew of a pretty famous street photographer from St Petersburg, whom I decided to contact. To my surprise, he immediately agreed to show me his city.

My first impression of St Petersburg was the noise. Compared to my hometown of Ulm, or any other city I know, the volume was just overwhelming. Furthermore, the air seemed to be impregnated with exhaust fumes. Moreover, there were steep urban canyons as the houses were so huge that their architecture made me feel insignificantly small. Nevertheless, it was love at first sight! We were usually able to hit the streets at about 6pm so, by then, the city was already covered with that magical golden light. In the beginning, my colleague often had to wait for me as I took my shots. After a while, he got excited about street photography and he, too, started taking photos with his mobile phone.

X100F at f/4, 1/125 sec, ISO 2500





X100F at f/5.6,
1/400 sec, ISO 200