

PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION

Alexander Zhitomirsky

Long Walk Home

ca. 1930

Lithograph, ink, and gelatin silver print collage

10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.3 cm)

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Alexander Zhitomirsky was just in his early twenties when he made this photomontage, *Long Walk Home*, in the early 1930s. As a fledgling illustrator in Soviet newspapers and journals, he was exposed to the examples of innovative photomontages by his countrymen Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky, as well as John Heartfield's powerful political montages in the German leftist publication *AIZ*.

Long Walk Home is a subtle, personal work quite unlike the overt political propaganda characteristic of Heartfield and much Soviet photomontage of the 1930s. This autobiographical work is a pictorial narrative of the artist's reunion with his wife, and suggests a private rather than a political story. The multimedia combination of lithography, colored ink, and collaged photographs is especially rich in viewing the original as compared to the black-and-white reproductions of political montages that are usually seen in mass communication media.

Zhitomirsky would move on to make highly charged political montages against the Nazis through the 1930s and World War II. His work continued to be influential in Soviet propaganda publication, making anticapitalist and anti-U.S. illustrations as late as the confrontations over Cuba and Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s. His later propaganda works are certainly easier to read—as polemic political illustrations should be—but this early personal work has an engaging mystery and character as a physical art object that makes it worth returning to for new discoveries not expected from political art.

