



A Call to Arms

Date

1941-45 (printed 2003)

Primary Maker

Dmitri Baltermants

Medium

Gelatin silver print

Description

A Call to Arms was made during World War II on the eastern front, where the Russian military fought to repel invading Nazi forces in

one of the deadliest military confrontations in history. The artist, Dmitri Baltermants, later stated that, like the soldiers themselves, “we Soviet photographers also went off to war untrained” and learned their craft on the battlefield. Many images depicting the horrors of the Nazi offensive were not published at the time, censored by the Russian government to prevent loss of morale. Only in the 1960s, under Premier Nikita Khrushchev, were more photographs by Baltermants and his colleagues made public, and ordinary Russians began to grasp the full extent of their military’s suffering and casualties during the war. Today, Baltermants is probably the best-known photographer in Russia’s history. Nicknamed the “Eye of the Nation,” he captured moments from those wartime battles to the modernization of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Prior to becoming a photojournalist in 1939, he had been a lecturer on mathematics at a military academy. Baltermants credited the painter Aleksandr Rodchenko and the photographer Arkady Shaikhat as influences: from the former, he learned the importance of framing, and from the latter, how to publicize one’s art. Over a number of years, Thomas J. Wilson and Jill M. Garling, P2016, have donated many documentary photographs of the mid- to late twentieth century to the Wellin Museum, supporting its growing collection of photography and politically engaged art. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Image: 12 1/8 x 18 1/4 in. (30.8 x 46.4 cm) Sheet: 15 15/16 x 19 7/8 in. (40.5 x 50.5 cm)