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| http://art.holocaust-education.net/images/photographs/a6.jpg | **Esther Lurie1913-1998** |

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| **Biography** |

Esther Lurie was born in Liepaja, Latvia, to a religious Jewish family with five children. Her family were forced to leave during World War I because the city's importance as a military port. In 1917 they shifted to Riga. She already showed artistic talent in kindergarten and began to develop professionally from the age of fifteen, studying with various teachers. From 1931-1934 she learned theatrical set design in Brussels, and afterwards studied drawing in Antwerp.

In 1934 Lurie migrated to Palestine with most of her family and worked at various artistic activities. When events limited theatrical activity in Palestine, she devoted herself to drawing - producing many portraits. Her favorite subjects were dancers and musicians.

In 1939 she travelled to Europe to further her studies, visiting France and Antwerp. That summer she visited relatives in Latvia and Lithuania, exhibiting work in Riga and also at Kovno (Kaunas) in Lithuania (both in 1939). The next year she held another exhibition at Kovno's Royal Opera House on the theme of "The Ballet".

World War II had begun while she was in Lithuania and during the Nazi occupation (1941-44) she was imprisoned in the [Kovno ghetto](http://art.holocaust-education.net/explore.asp?langid=1&submenu=201&id=6) along with the other Jews. As soon as she entered the ghetto, in mid-1941, Lurie began to sketch views of her new world. In addition to the characters and events, she also depicted the landscapes, whose beauty was in direct contradiction to the terrors of life in the ghetto.

Lurie drew everywhere in the ghetto, including the pottery workshop. She got the idea of asking the Jewish potters to prepare a number of jars for her. Lurie hid her art collection - approximately 200 drawings and watercolors of 25 x 35 cm - in the large jars she had prepared in advance. One of her ghetto friends succeeded in rescuing 11 sketches and watercolors of her works that were taken later to Israel.

In July 1944, as the Red Army approached Lithuania, the ghetto was liquidated and set on fire. Esther Lurie was sent to Germany, leaving her hidden works behind. Along with the other women from the ghetto, she was placed in [Stutthof concentration camp](http://art.holocaust-education.net/explore.asp?langid=1&submenu=201&id=8) and remained there until the end of July 1944. She was separated from her sister, with whom she had lived during the whole ghetto period. Lurie's sister and young nephew were deported to [Auschwitz](http://art.holocaust-education.net/explore.asp?langid=1&submenu=201&id=12) and did not survive the war.

Lurie was liberated by the Red Army on 21 January 1945. In March 1945 she reached a camp in Italy, where she met Jewish soldiers from Palestine who were serving in the British army. Lurie reached Israel (Palestine) in July 1945 and was received with great excitement. She married, raised a family and continued to create and exhibit in group and solo exhibitions in Israel and elsewhere. Esther Lurie passed away in Tel Aviv in 1998.

**TASK I. Answer the questions.**

1. Where was Esther born?
2. Why was her family forced to leave the native town?
3. In what countries did she study?
4. How did Esther appear in Kaunas ghetto?
5. How did she manage to hide her ghetto paintings?
6. What concentration camps are mentioned in the text?
7. What happened to Esther’s relatives?
8. Did Esther succeed in her life? Prove your answer.

**TASK II. How could you describe this painting of Esther Lurie?**

