

Boris Lurie **EVER THE RADICAL**

Oxo Gallery
Oxo Tower Wharf, SE1 9PH
24 September to 11 October
Free Entry, 11am to 6pm

Join us for the Private View Wednesday 23rd September 6:30 to 8pm
RSVP - Lurie@benuri.org

Boris Lurie (1924, Leningrad – 2008, New York) stands out as one of the great unsung radical artists of the twentieth century. His work constitutes a powerful artistic engagement with persecution, violence, and memory in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Featuring almost 40 artworks created between 1946 and 2003, *EVER THE RADICAL* brings together a representative selection spanning nearly six decades of Lurie's artistic career.

Raised in a prosperous Jewish family in Riga, Lurie's life was profoundly disrupted by the German occupation of Latvia in 1941. Together with his father, he survived the Riga Ghetto, forced labour, and the labour and concentration camps of Lenta, Salaspils, Stutthof, and Buchenwald. His mother, grandmother, younger sister, and first love were murdered on December 8, 1941, during the Rumbula Massacre. In April 1945, father and son were liberated by U.S. forces at the Magdeburg-Polte subcamp in Germany. They emigrated to New York in 1946.

Shortly after arriving in the United States, Lurie began to process his memories of imprisonment, the loss of family members, and his native city of Riga through art. This effort gave rise to the *War Series*, a body of drawings, gouaches, and paintings begun in 1946.

In 1957, Lurie was among the co-founders of the March Gallery in New York, an important venue within the city's independent art scene. Together with Stanley Fisher and Sam Goodman, he developed the NO!art movement. Conceived as a counterpoint to Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and the growing commercialization of the avant-garde, NO!art advanced an uncompromising critique of capitalism, consumerism, racism, war, sexism, and genocide. For Lurie in particular, the media's simultaneous presentation of Holocaust imagery, advertising, and entertainment reflected a society that both suppressed and / or reproduced historical violence in a manner that devalued the importance and significance of a hitherto unknown scale of genocide.

Within the context of NO!art, Lurie developed a distinctive visual language that combined painting, photography, assemblage, and collage. He juxtaposed images of Nazi atrocities with motifs drawn from consumer culture and the entertainment industry, especially pin-up photography. These confrontations were intended to provoke discomfort and raise questions about memory, voyeurism, and collective denial. Works such as *Lumumba Is Dead* (Adieu Amérique), (c. 1961) and *Railroad Collage* (*Railroad to America*) (c. 1963) connect historical violence with contemporary forms of political, media, and cultural power, exposing the contradictions of postwar society. In the later *Knives* and *Ax* series, tools are stripped of their practical function and transformed into symbols of exhausted and obstructed resistance.

Lurie's work rejects reconciliation. Instead, it calls on viewers to recognize – and confront – the continuities of violence, power, and exclusion in both past and present. At the same time, it demonstrates how art can become a space for remembrance, dissent, and critical social engagement.

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