

## Artist Bios



Image by Lucy Smith



Image by Ela Weissberger

**SAMUEL BAK** was born in 1933 in Vilna, Poland, a vibrant cultural center known as the “Jerusalem of Lithuania”. He was recognized as a small child of possessing extraordinary artistic genius. When Vilna was liberated in 1944, Bak was one of only 200 survivors from a once thriving community of over eighty thousand people. Bak immigrated in 1948 to Israel. He studied art at the Bezalel School in Jerusalem and at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Samuel currently lives in Boston, MA.

**DINA GOTTLIEBOVA BABBITT** was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1923. She painted Disney pictures on the walls of children’s barracks in Auschwitz to keep up their spirits. SS officers saw her work and brought her to the attention of Joseph Mengele, the Nazi physician who earned the moniker “Angel of Death” for the cruelty he visited upon prisoners. Mengele ordered Dina to paint portraits of the Gypsies before they were gassed. These portraits and her commentary provide a profound record. Dina currently lives in Felton, CA.

**ALFRED KANTOR** was born in 1923 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In 1941 at age 18, he was forced to quit art school and soon after was sent to Theresienstadt, a ghetto the Nazis used as a staging point for the death factory, Auschwitz-Birkenau. During imprisonment, Kantor began to make sketches. He memorized scenes during the day and sketched them at night. However, he destroyed most of his work, fearing that the Nazis would find it and kill him. At the end of the war in 1945, Kantor re-created new pictures from memory and together with the original camp sketches created a bound book. “The Book of Alfred Kantor”, published in 1971, contains over 120 images of what life and death were like in each camp. Kantor passed away in 2003 at age 79, in Yarmouth, Maine.

**LUCY SMITH** was born in Cracow, Poland in 1933. At age 6, she had to leave school after one month of attendance because education was no longer allowed for Jewish children. After many other indignities she was put in the ghetto where she was hiding together with her mother from the Nazis. These were intensified periods of searches for Jews—mainly children and elderly, to deport them to death camps. Lucy and her mother were lucky, they both survived. They changed their hiding places, they moved to different towns. They went through different aspects of hiding; the physical places of hiding, like attics, cellars, stores, bathrooms, and the psychological hiding; changed identities, pretending to be someone else, pretending to be Christian, while still holding to forbidden memories of former selves. Smith’s colorful artworks represent a culmination of her life’s extraordinary experiences of survival and determination. Smith’s path has taken her from Poland to France, Germany and the U.S. Lucy currently lives in St. Paul, MN.

**ELA WEISSBERGER** was born in 1930 in Czechoslovakia. In 1942, she and her family were deported to the Ghetto Theresienstadt which was a unique place in that it was Hitler’s showpiece. With it, he wanted to show the world that he was treating the Jews well. In reality it was just a transit stop on the way to Auschwitz. Weissberger created many pictures in 1943 and 1944. She also performed the role of the “Cat” in the children’s opera, Brundibar, 55 times during her imprisonment. In October 1944, the last transports left for Auschwitz; Weissberger is one of 100 children out of 15,000 who were left in Theresienstadt at the end of the war. Ela currently lives in Tappan, NY.