Dame Lucie Rie was born in Vienna, the youngest child of a Jewish physician. She studied pottery at an arts and crafts workshop. In 1925, she set up her first studio and exhibited at the Paris International Exhibition. At the same exhibition in 1937, she received a silver medal.

The next year she fled the Nazis to London, where she would become one of the country's renowned potters. During the war, she made ceramic buttons and jewelry to survive. In 1946, she brought on another Jewish émigré, Hans Coper, to assist her and sent him to pottery school. They collaborated until his death in 1981 at a small studio near Hyde Park where Rie was known to offer her visitors tea and cake.

Rie was friends with Bernard Leach, but her own work was bright, finely wrought and modernist in contrast to Leach's more subdued, everyday pieces. Her pieces are displayed in collections worldwide.