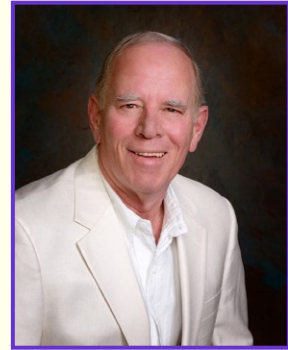


## **Elisha Ben Yitzhak's Personal Statement**

It wasn't until I witnessed the death of my best friend that I became an artist.

Through the symbolism of art and the emotions induced with painting, I could lay out all of the intense feelings that emerged after experiencing such a tragedy at the age of 21. The hand grenade that went off was supposed to be a routine exercise in training for the Israeli Army, but instead became a turning point that forever changed my life.



I grew up in a culture far different from the American way of life. Kibbutz Kfar Blum was a farming community in Upper Galilee in Israel. It emphasized the importance of cultivating the land, not encouraging and appreciating the arts. My attempt at self expression was found offensive and intolerable to the Kibbutz during my youth.

Nevertheless, in 1965, I began attending the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem. Mornings and afternoons were spent laboring on the farm, and at night, I would take art classes. At Bezalel we were told what to paint, but I craved more self-expression and freedom. Eventually, I left Bezalel to attend the Avni Art Institute in Tel Aviv. It was a time of clarity and perspective. I was privileged to have master artists as my teachers, such as Moses Props and Yehezkel Streichman, who encouraged me to pursue my interest and persevere. Looking back, I found that this was one of my most productive times as a young artist. Several paintings that appear on my Web site, ([www.elishasart.com](http://www.elishasart.com)), were conceived at the Avni Art Institute.

While at Avni, I was affiliated with the Kibbutz Artist Association, which showed my paintings at different group exhibits in Israel and abroad. In 1968, along with several other artists, one of my paintings was selected to represent the Kibbutz Artist Association's exhibit at the famed Tate Gallery in London. It was a great honor for me, especially when I was notified by the Tate Gallery that my painting was sold to a private collector.

Between 1971-1974, I represented the Kibbutz Movements and the Jewish Agency in South Africa and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, to lecture on Israeli culture. While in South Africa, I continued painting and showing my work. Influential and affluent art enthusiasts requested private showings in galleries and homes, which increased my art's popularity. Tom Bloomfield, the owner of the "Tengenenge Art Community" in Rhodesia,

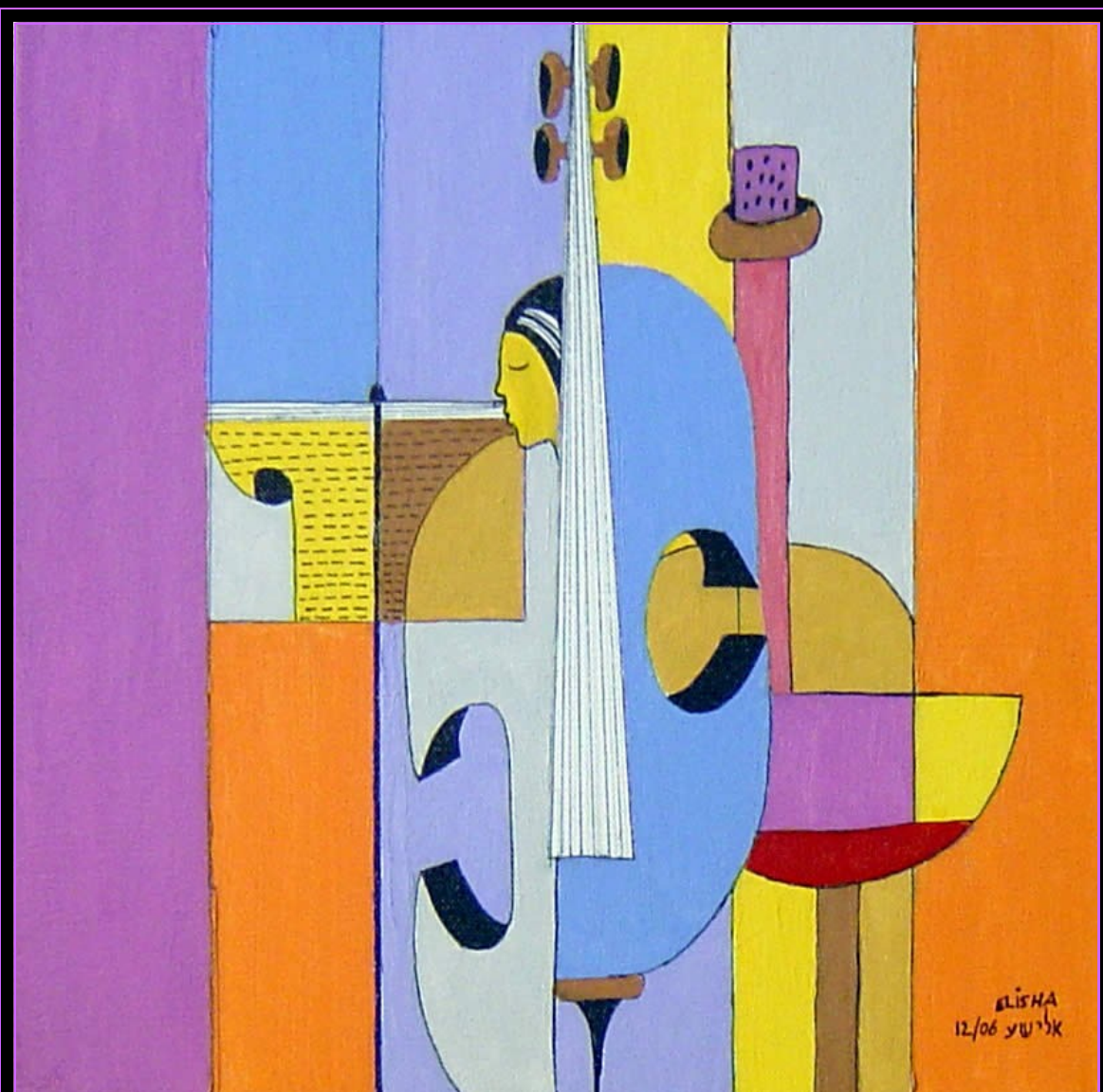
purchased a number of my paintings. Years later, when I visited South Africa, I was surprised to find soapstone sculptures identical to my paintings.

In 1974, I returned to the Kibbutz and resumed showing my paintings in local and international galleries and private homes. It was during that time that I shared one of my paintings, At Last, with Sara Breitberg, a curator at the prestigious Tel Aviv Art Museum. She was so impressed with the idea behind the painting, the fine lines, and the technique that she kept this painting in the museum's collection.

I was sent by the Jewish Agency in 1980 to represent Israel in Milwaukee and the Midwest. After my return to Israel three years later, I started working for the Ministry of Tourism in Jerusalem. In 1985, I returned to Milwaukee to establish Heavenly International Tours, a tour company that takes groups of people to the Holy Land and other international destinations. The new business venture caused me to stop painting, but at the end of 2006, I could no longer stay away from my life's passion. In December 2006, I created my first artistic piece in 21 years: Emotions. Vibrant and beautiful, it demonstrates my emotions upon returning to the canvas. Now I would like to share this particular piece, valued at over \$8,000, and donate it to the Milwaukee Art Museum so others can observe it and enjoy one of my favorite art expressions.

My paintings are about the essence and rhythm of life, all depicting symbols of life the way I see it. I have always strived to reach the ultimate balance in composition and colors. The struggle of making a society more receptive to art in general has followed me throughout my life. I strongly believe that art plays an important role in every society by transforming thinking and understanding of the immediate surroundings. I have faced numerous challenges in my artistic life, but the desire to paint prevailed. I am humbled and gratified that private art collectors, galleries, and museums around the world have obtained many of my paintings. In December 2009, I participated in the prestigious Florence Biennale art show. In 2010, my paintings will be exhibited in the Southern Nevada Museum of Fine Art, and in September 2010, at the Broadway Gallery in New York City.

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# “Emotions”

Acrylic on Canvas

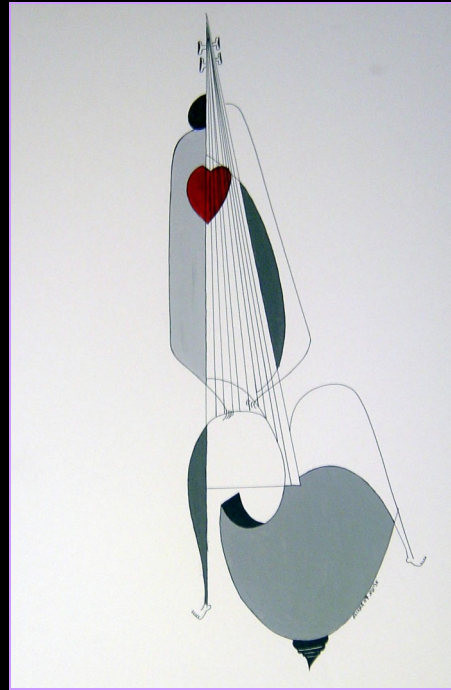
*Elisha Ben-Yitzhak*



**“A Village on a Mountain”**  
Acrylic on Canvas



**“Tears”**  
Acrylic on Canvas



**“Heart Strings”**  
Ink & Acrylic on Board



**“A Woman  
With a Mandolin”**  
Acrylic on Canvas

*Elisha Ben-Yitzhak*  
Artist