

RESPITE MEYDAD ELIYAHU



INTRODUCTION

The past few years in Israel have been marked by ongoing uncertainty. Israelis face the challenge of navigating complex personal and collective realities simultaneously. As Israel's national days approach, we reflect on our shared experiences and the significant impact these years have had on the individual and the nation. In times like these, words alone can fall short, and art offers a way to engage with complexity and reflection. In this guide, we use art as a tool to pause, observe nuances, and hold multiple interpretations without the pressure of arriving at a single resolution.

The painting featured in this educational guide is part of the current exhibition at Beit Avi Chai, *My Life at the Moment*, which brings together five prominent contemporary Jerusalem-based artists reflecting on life during this ongoing period. The exhibition's title, drawn from a line by the Jerusalem poet Israel Eliraz, invites viewers to look closely at a single moment and embrace the emotions and contradictions it contains.

The painting we will explore, *Respite*, was created during a time of conflict and carries layered meanings. The oval frame acts as a lens through which we view a space that feels slightly removed, as though we are looking through a window or a telescope.

» [Image: Respite - Jpeg format](#)

» [The Painting on the gallery website](#)

ARTIST & ART HISTORY CONTEXT


Meydad Eliyahu (b. 1983) is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, and educator based in Jerusalem. He studied at the Jerusalem Studio School and has received several awards, including the 2016 Ministry of Culture Young Artist Award and the 2011 Shoshana Ish-Shalom Prize.

Respite is part of his series *Between Battles*, created shortly before the ceasefire. These scenes invite viewers to consider both what is visible and what is unseen and beyond the image's scope. Eliyahu presents ambiguous yet familiar imagery with a distinctive color palette. The inverted colors result in a "negative" effect which subtly lightens the tone of his work, creating a restrained note of optimism. These compositions transform real-life events into works that are both documentary and poetic, capturing the liminal space of "respite," a pause, or "in-between" moment within an ongoing experience.

Note to facilitator:

This guide provides a gentle way to engage with complex aspects of the contemporary Israeli reality through art. The goal is to create space for observation, reflection, and personal connection, without seeking to resolve a problem or provide an answer.

QUICK OBSERVATION:

 Look closely at the painting. Spend about 30 seconds letting your eyes move from top to bottom, from side to side, and through the center; then share your initial impressions.

- Notice the colors, shapes, frame, and space inside the oval.
- Observe the atmosphere: How might you describe it? Is it calm, tense, suspended, active?

PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Reflect individually on the following questions, then choose two or three of your responses to discuss in pairs or small groups.

- ? What do you think about the choice of colors? What feelings do they spark?
- ? What do the shapes in the painting look like to you? Do you see specific objects, or do they remain ambiguous? How does the way you identify them influence your reading of the painting?
- ? Does anything about the painting feel unsettled or out of place? What creates that feeling?
- ? Do the objects feel still or as though they are in motion? What do you see that makes you feel this way?
- ? How does the oval shape affect the way you enter the scene? Does it feel protective, observational, nostalgic, or isolating? What do you imagine is beyond the bounds of the frame?

THE MUSIC OF THE PAINTING

- ? If this painting has a sound, what would it be? What sounds or musical instruments come to mind?
- ? If there were a soundtrack to accompany this painting, what song would you choose? Why?

Optional: Go around sharing the music you chose. How might different soundtracks change or deepen the way we interpret the work?

UNPACKING THE TITLE

The title **Respite** suggests a pause or break in-between moments, often in the midst of difficulty.

- ? Why do you think the artist chose this title?
- ? What do you think it might mean to be in-between, and what might that look like in the context of the painting?
- ? Have you ever been in a space that felt unclear, as though you were between a “before” and an “after”? What did that space feel like?
- ? If you had to rename the painting, what would your title be?

CREATIVE RESPONSE (CHOOSE ONE OR BOTH)

Writing:

- Begin a stream-of-consciousness exercise inspired by the painting, using either your own title or the title **Respite**.
- Write continuously for two minutes without filtering or stopping. Don't lift your pen.
- Then, look back at what you wrote and shape it into a short paragraph, using your chosen word, phrase, or sentence as the opening line.

Visual Response:

- Sketch the scene before or after this moment.
- Redraw the image without the oval frame and continue the landscape.
- Change the colors to match a different mood.

WRAP-UP

Look back at your observations, reflections, and creative responses. Notice how your understanding of the painting changed as you looked, talked, listened, and created.

Consider:

- ? How did the oval frame shape what you noticed or imagined?
- ? What changed when you thought about the painting in different ways?
- ? What stayed with you?

FINAL REFLECTION

Look slowly at the painting once more. Notice the restrained, hopeful colors and the way they lighten the scene. Think about moments in your own life where small, unexpected brightness appears, even in times of uncertainty. Consider ways that we can look and see beyond the limits of our own frames, reminding us that there is always more than what we first notice, and always a before and after still unfolding. Let yourself carry that sense of openness and possibility beyond this moment.

Note to facilitator: Click here to explore the rest of the exhibition's virtual gallery where you can view the artist's other paintings and series in the exhibition. For the images from the same series, *Between Battles*, ask similar questions and continue to explore how framing, perspective, and different ways of seeing shape your interpretation of each work.