

Amateur painters discover their inner Van Gogh at group-art events

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

If you're one of those people who were once told that you "didn't have any artistic ability," so you stopped trying, good news! It's not too late to discover the joy of painting.

PaintNite is a group art experience where you can enjoy a drink (or more) while creating a 16" by 20" acrylic painting under the guidance of a facilitator. They're becoming hugely popular, with sold-out events.

Buffalo Gap Saloon and Eatery (6835 SW Macadam Ave) regularly hosts PaintNite. The night I attended, there were 35 canvases set up, along with plates of acrylic color, and three brushes. Bailey Cain was the teacher, but ignore that title.

"It's not an art class where you feel judged, but more like a party," she said. "What I really love about it is encouraging people who feel they can't paint, and making them feel comfortable enough to try."

Our project was the "Whimsical Birds" painting that was at the head of the room. A blank canvas sat next to it for Cain to demonstrate.

Cain said there is basically only one rule: Paint the canvas, not your friends! She needn't have worried. While people were there to have fun, they also wanted to take home something they could be proud of.

Vickie Buckley came for her second PaintNite. "Painting is in my heart. And I don't know how, so to come out with

PaintNite and to get an artist to stand there and do a play-by-play sketch for you, and it actually end up looking like something? I think it's cool!"

Sue Xiong came with three friends after hearing about it on Facebook. "I was really intrigued by the idea of paint your own painting. I mean, I haven't painted since kindergarten, and I don't know how it will turn out, but I hear they have good instructions, so I hope that's the case."

We began with the "big brush" for the background color. Cain demonstrated the technique of blending the color from bright yellow at the top, to orange and then red in the middle and then dark red at the bottom.

Music blasted as we painted, which added to the party feel. Laughter and conversation bubbled around the room. As Cain guided us in the next step – making colorful "swooshes" on the now-dry background, the comments began to fly:

"I made too many swooshes!" one woman lamented. "You can't have too many swooshes!" Cain responded.

"I can't get it to blend right!" another said. "Try using a little more water to spread the paint around on the canvas," Cain suggested.

Next we painted the vines, then the birds and before we knew it, our two hours were up and we were all staring at an honest-to-God-original work of art we created ourselves.

Even though we were all copying the same image, every painting was unique, because everybody had a completely different artistic style. Cain



Sue Xiong, Andy Phan, and Anna D'Silva show off their completed paintings.
(Post photo by KC Cowan)

said that's one thing she loves about PaintNite.

"They are all so different. People think I'm acting when I go around and admire their work, but I'm really excited to see the direction they go," she said.

At the end, everyone seemed happy with their painting, but even if they weren't, one veteran PaintNite patron said you just have to give it some time. After you take it home and study it for

a while, you'll decide it's pretty darn good, after all.

There are painting parties weekly, at different locations around Portland. The PaintNite website shows what paintings are scheduled for each party.

There's a huge variety of styles and subject matter. They're even rated by difficulty. The cost is about \$45 a night, but there are often discounts via Groupon. So check it out. Your inner-artist is waiting!

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