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## Paint Nite: Get drunk and make a painting at a New York City bar

Alisha Litman, Lexi Lipkin, Jenna Siegel and Blair Lipkin drinking wine before a Paint Nite class begins. Credit: Bess Adler/Metro

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At the beginning of a painting class on the Lower East Side earlier this week, our instructor issued a warning.

“As the night goes on, it’s a lot easier to mix up your water cup and your drink cup,” cautioned Maura Jacobs, 24. “Or to dip your dirty paintbrush into your actual drink. ... Don’t want to scare anyone, but it happens a lot.”

During [Paint Nite](#) events, where we're supposed to "drink creatively," local artists like Jacobs help tipsy pupils fill a blank canvas to mixed results. That night, Jacobs would walk us through "The Cove," a painting she designed for the class featuring a bright yellow moon and dark sea.

Most of us hadn't held a paintbrush since elementary school. But that was OK — there were happy hour specials.

"If at any point you feel a little bit nervous or a little sensitive about what you're doing or what your painting looks like...take a drink," Jacobs instructed. "I'm not kidding — it's kind of our only rule."



While drinking is not required, Paint Nite encourages participants to have fun. The classes are designed for students to enjoy themselves with the hope they might continue their art education, explained co-founder Sean McGrail.

"There's not enough opportunities for people to paint after they reach a certain age," McGrail said. And the drinking, he said, is an incentive.

Jacobs, who has some experience teaching art to children, said Paint Nite classes are comparable because of the laid-back barroom atmosphere and, of course, the alcohol.

"I think the drinking makes them a lot more comfortable," she said of her stupefied students.

It worked. After four cocktails, I felt like the next Picasso.

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While I streaked some purple onto the canvas and sipped drink number two — a jalapeno margarita — Jacobs came over and asked how things were going.

“I’m not going to lie,” I said, pointing at my masterpiece. “This looks damn good.”



One of my classmates, Rebecca Nazario, agreed that drinking increased her confidence.

“It makes you feel a little less of afraid of making mistakes,” said Nazario, 28.

Paint Nite began in [Boston](#) and came to the city in fall 2012. Right now, about 25 artists hold \$65 classes in about 75 bars in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. McGrail said he’s hoping to eventually get artists to teach in the Bronx and on Staten Island.

Most of my class — with only women in attendance — seemed to enjoy themselves. And despite the numerous drinks, the paintings didn't look half bad either.

"This was fun," student Camilla Dornguast said. "I normally hate art."

### **My painting**



Paint Nite is all about encouraging creativity, not mastering the craft. When asked about my painting, Jacobs gave a similarly-supportive critique.

While working on the sky in my piece, I added purple without being told to do so.

"That was wonderful," Jacobs said. "Something that not a lot of people do."

But other parts of the sky could have used some work.

"It's strongest on the outside and towards the bottom," Jacobs said. "It's weakest on in middle."

I spent a lot of time on the sea — at least a whole margarita's worth — and it apparently paid off.

"Your water and your mountains are definitely the best part," Jacobs said. "Your brush strokes bled together really nicely. All the colors are layered on top of each other, everything looks cohesive."

**If you go:**

Paint Nite events are held multiple times a week in Manhattan (mostly downtown), Brooklyn and Queens. Classes, about two ours long, are \$65 but there are sometimes deals on [Groupon](#) and [Travelzoo](#).



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Rebecca Mena at Paint Nite on the Lower East Side. Credit: Bess Adler/Metro

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Heather Twible and Carolyn Leonard participate in Paint Nite on the Lower East Side. Credit: Bess Adler/Metro

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Paint Nite instructor Maura Jacobs holds up her two versions of "The Cove" painting. Credit: Bess Adler/Metro

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