



Photo Supplied

Folks can let their creative sides out at Paint Nite events held at bars across the Capital Region, including at O'Maille's Irish Pub in St. Albert.

## Creativity overflows at Paint Nite events

**GLENN COOK**

*St. Albert Leader*

A bar in St. Albert is letting patrons' creativity flow along with the spirits.

For the past few months, Paint Nite events have been popping up all over Edmonton, encouraging people to come out and learn to paint while enjoying a few cocktails. Recently, though, Paint Nite expanded into St. Albert, setting up shop at O'Maille's Irish Pub, and the response so far has been very positive, with most of the sessions sold out.

"We were a bit surprised at the beginning, only because we weren't sure how Edmonton and St. Albert would gauge this new idea," said Serena Tang, lead artist for Paint Nite Edmonton. "So when we first put this new idea out there, we were tentative but we were hopeful. And when we saw the response, we were more than happy to see everyone was so on board."

Paint Nite events take place in major metropolitan centres across North America. Instructors like Tang take patrons through the techniques necessary to create a specific painting, and maybe put their own little spin on it.

"It's not as strict as classes," Tang said. "We try to make it an event where we do a painting and it's not so much teaching people. We encourage having a drink and being social while also being creative."

That mixture of creativity and being social is a big part of Paint Nite's appeal.

"It's another event that people can try to switch up any normal plans they have and try something new," Tang said. "Another appeal of Paint Nite is that some people really enjoy painting, but it's a big

commitment to buy all these materials and do it in their own home. So when you come to Paint Nite, everything is here for you, all the materials, and you don't have to do any of the cleanup."

The paintings can range from easy to difficult, and supplies like brushes, aprons and canvasses are included with the registration fee, which is usually around \$45 per session.

While the painters are having a blast, so too are the venues, Tang said.

"We try to accommodate them with nights that maybe they aren't as busy. That way, we can get them more business — maybe a weekday when people might be at home because they're working. And if we introduce new people to these bars, perhaps they really enjoy it and will go back on other nights."

Other Paint Nite venues in the Edmonton area include Hudson's locations in Oliver Square and South Edmonton Common, Mercer Tavern, Ed's Rec Room and O2's Taphouse and Grill on Jasper Avenue.

But, no matter where it's happening, Tang feels Paint Nite is a great way to make the arts more accessible.

"The art community here is quite big, but sometimes if you're not a part of it, doing it as a job or a profession, sometimes you don't hear about it as much," she said. "So this is a way to introduce art to people who don't get to do it as an everyday thing."

Events at O'Maille's are usually on Saturdays, although Tang said they are looking to add more dates all over the region. For more information on Paint Nite or to see a list of scheduled events, visit [www.paintnite.com](http://www.paintnite.com).