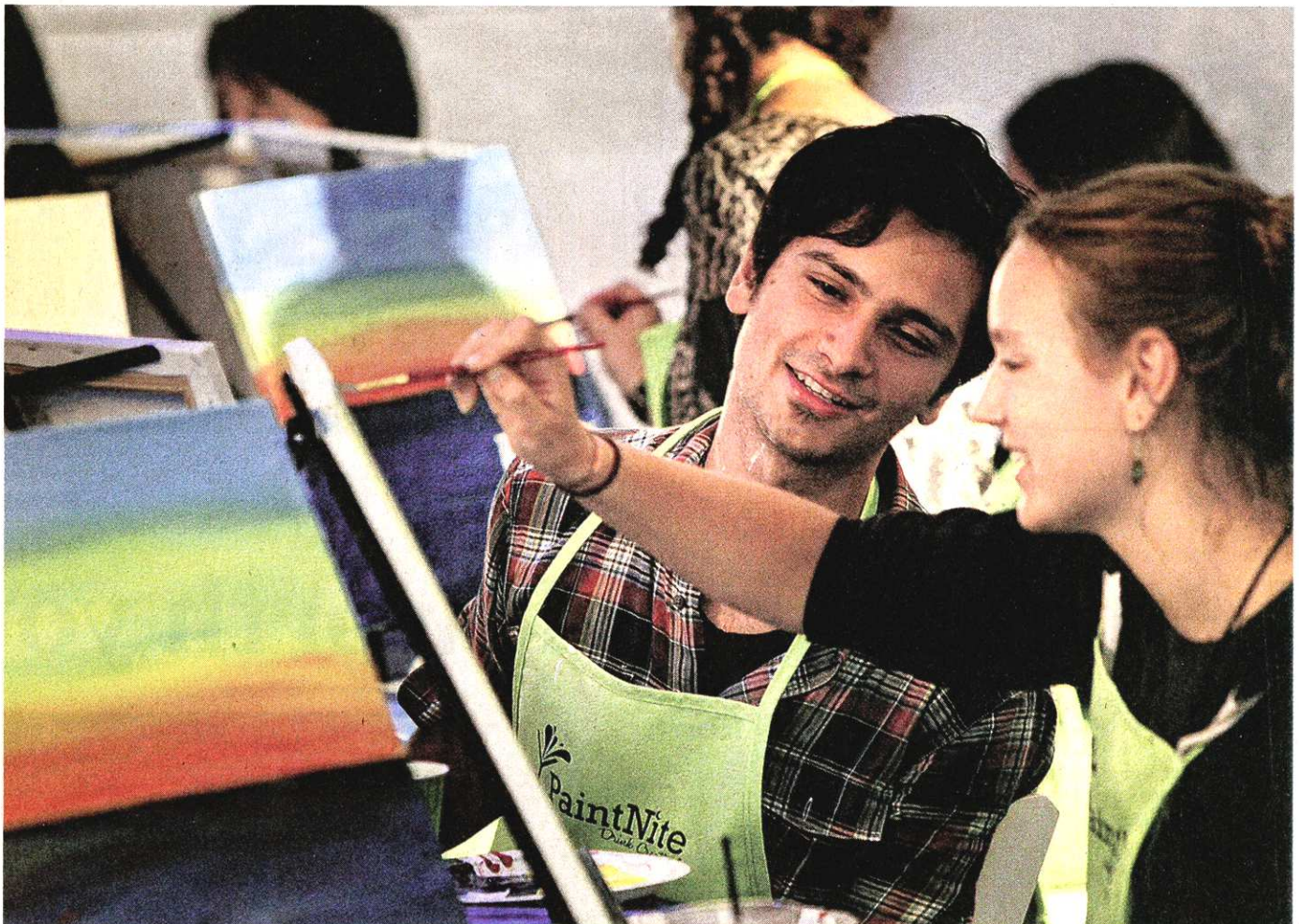


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Datebook

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Photos by Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle

Frank Passalacqua (left) checks out Alex Renirie's painting at a Paint Nite event held every Tuesday at Temple Nightclub.

DATEBOOK

Inner artist coaxed out for cocktails

Painting from page E1

scene. Hermann's company, which was founded in Boston two years ago and has since spread to 25 cities across the country, opened in San Francisco last month and joins other social painting companies like ArtSocial, and Wine and Canvas.

While those businesses — and others like them nationwide — set up classes in art studios and sell wine as social and artistic inspiration, Paint Nite brings painting to already established night-life venues. The company's slogan, Drink Creatively, is a good indication of its priorities.

"It's fun first, drinking second and painting third," says Delaplaine, who lives in Berkeley.

"I would flip-flop drinking and painting," chuckles Hermann, adding that other companies "are a little more serious on the art. What we're trying to do is a little more serious on the social and interactive side."

Step by step

At each Paint Nite event, an instructor takes students step by step through the creation of a particular painting — one that is accessible to novices and can be completed within two hours — all while they sip cocktails.

For the Temple gathering, Delaplaine taught students how to draw the ocean-scape painting "Whale Tail."

Not everyone stuck to the template, however. A couple of friends seated nearby, Alex Renirie and Frank Passalacqua of San Francisco, were working on paintings conspic-



Photos by Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle

Above, Arya Mortazavi (left) gets encouragement from Sarvey Alibeigi at Paint Nite at Temple Nightclub led by instructor Torrey Delaplaine, bottom (center), guiding students through "Whale Tail."

uously devoid of sunsets and whale tails.

Renirie was creating a flowing mural of yoni-inspired trees and flowers, while Passalacqua was working on an alien planet entering hyperspace mode.

"I wanted to do my own thing," Renirie said as she touched up a flower. "He (Passalacqua) brought me here for my birthday. I was feeling crazy, and I wanted art therapy. ... This has been very therapeutic."

Rebel though he was, Passalacqua eventually capitulated to the instructions and drew a whale tail by his planet. "It needed something at the bottom," he said. "It's a cosmic whale."

Hermann and business partner Sean McGrail came up with Paint Nite

after they attended a friend's birthday party where they painted and drank wine — which made a winning combination.

"It's an easy way to interact with other people," Hermann said. "You immediately have something to talk about, whether someone's painting is great or it's terrible. It lends itself to socialness."

Nonartists welcome

Paint Nite is geared primarily toward non-artists, though that's not to say that prodigies don't occasionally end up in the classes.

"Early on, a guy at one of our classes did a painting of the guy sitting across from him doing a painting," Hermann said. The artist ended up sell-



ing his meta-painting to its unwitting model.

While skeptics may point to the typically short life of similarly hip urban trends, Hermann thinks Paint Nite has staying power. "In today's world where everything is structured and bureaucratic and digital, painting connects you to your childhood in a way that an adult doesn't have

a lot of other outlets for," he said.

At Temple, the social painting phenomenon was not confined to the room with the 30-odd easels. One area of the nightclub had three walls of blank canvas and an assortment of paints and paintbrushes, and a lively group of partygoers was painting on the provided surfaces.

This event was "Painting to the People," a weekly collaborative art party that Temple organizes. Caleb Silver, the owner and operator of Paint Nite SF, joined forces with Painting to the People, and now the two events happen simultaneously every Tuesday night.

Surrealist vibe

One local artist and Painting to the People enthusiast, San Francisco resident Robert Karns, was adding white lines to an abstract monolith on one of the communal canvases. He was clearly working within the surrealist tradition.

"In this scene, you sort of see this person's face, and I put clouds that look like eyes," he said. "It just came out. I didn't question it."

Karns pointed to another creation of his: "This is like a cross between a voodoo doll, a pumpkin head and something that somebody stepped on.

"Man, I love it here," he said. "I'm going to bring all my artist friends."

Away from the commotion, a San Francisco woman, Samurai, was serving tea in the corner of the room. She's been serving tea at art-theme parties for a while.

"It's a hard gap to bridge: party culture and tea culture," Samurai said, though she seemed to be blending the cultures seamlessly. "Art comes in many forms. This is our form of art: conscious, focused parties."

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