

# The Fresno Bee

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# Sip, party and paint



## Painting parties are the new night out

Events held at bars, restaurants, wineries, etc.

### Zero artistic talent needed to participate

BY BETHANY CLOUGH  
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**A** tipsy, giggly, creative trend is sweeping the Valley: painting parties.

This combination of a painting class paired with a drink is the new date night. And the new girls' night out. Or whatever combination of people you wish since there are ones that welcome children, too (minus the drinks, of course).

The amount of artistic talent needed to participate? Zero.

At the end of the two- or three-hour session led by a teacher, the participants come home with a painting they did themselves - and hopefully the memory of a fun evening out.

Fresno and the Valley are home to a multitude of these events, hosted everywhere from bars to art galleries. There are national companies leading them, along with the solo local artist hosting in her art studio and everything in between.

They range from a full-on party packed with 20-some-things, where it's not unusual

for a dance competition to break out, to more subdued events at wine bars that attract mother-daughter duos and senior citizens. Plenty of men participate in the events, too.

The cost ranges from \$25 to \$45.

And it just keeps growing.

**Paint Nite** - the big dog in town - is expanding into the South Valley, and Pinot's Palette, a franchise owned by a local couple, is getting ready to open in April near Cracked Pepper Bistro at Palm and Herndon avenues.

The events have even inspired a few regulars you could say are addicted to the events - like Jennifer Reyes of Fresno.

She's a nurse who manages four departments dealing with sick children at a local hospital. Painting parties offer a way to take her mind off her stressful job.

"After the first time I was like, 'Oh, this is so relaxing,'" she says. "That critical side completely shuts down and you can just relax."

The events, which people book online, usually sell out - sometimes weeks in advance. The companies also hold private events and fundraisers.

"It's huge," says Mike Capka, "chief fun officer" for Paint Nite, a Boston-based company that hosts events nationwide.

"I figured we could do it two

**“**  
**THERE'S JUST A LACK OF THAT CREATIVE RELEASE IN LIFE IN GENERAL THESE DAYS. PEOPLE ARE CRAVING IT.**

*Denine Bennett, Sublime Time*



Dawn Deis, left and her daughter Miranda Deis, 10, enjoy a paint party earlier this month at Sublime Time in the M Street Arts Complex in downtown Fresno.



Steed, center, and Shannon Ferreira, of Moreno Valley clink their glasses.

The Brush & Easel Gallery holds private painting parties, and other sessions, including painting ceramic teapots.



BRUSH & EASEL, Special on The Draw



Kathleen Moroney, left, of Fowler, and Frankie Rodriguez, of Fresno, laugh at Sublime Time.

At a recent **Paint Nite** at DiCicco's in Clovis, 40 people are settling into chairs at long tables in the bar after buying a glass of wine or beer from the bartender. The easels, paint, canvas and aprons are all provided by Paint Nite.

There's a little tension and somebody mumbles "What did you get us into?" but that attitude quickly vanishes when Fresno artist Brenda Allison takes the floor.

She shows the painters their big "hunka hunka burning love papa brush" and their thin "sexy mama" brush and the crowd is already throwing out a "woohoo" or two.

Allison makes the painters take a pledge: "I promise to relax, to have fun and to laugh my ass off."

Tonight the group is painting a pair of cranes in silhouette in front of a yellow sunset. Allison walks them through every step of the process, including describing the crane's bodies as a series of ovals so that even the least artistic person can paint them.

"It's amazing what vodka can do," says Kenny Stephenson of Fowler, who came with his wife, Pam. "If I have a few more of these I'm going to design a whole new species."

Before long, there are selfies being snapped, painters are twisting Allison's words into silly double entendres, and when the guitar player in the next room starts singing "My Girl," half the painters join in.

At the end of the night, everyone's painting looks like Allison's example, but all are a little different. Some are fat and happy. Some are thin and

wispy. One looks prehistoric. "You are all artists tonight," Allison declares.

## HOW TO CHOOSE

Since there are so many different types of painting parties, here's some tips to pick what's right for you.

**Pick your venue:** Obviously, you want to pick a painting you like to paint. But the venue will determine what type of experience you have. Want rowdy fun? Go to a place like HCK. Want quiet? Go to one that doesn't have alcohol or a more laid-back winery or The Tasting Room.

**Look for discounts:** They're out there, including Groupon. Paint Nite customers can use the coupon code FSU20 to get \$20 off.

**Don't be scared:** No artistic talent is needed. The teachers walk students through the painting step by step and provide individual attention.

## PAINTING PARTIES IN THE VALLEY

### The Artist in Me

● **Where:** 1085 E Herndon Ave #108

● **Type:** Classroom setting/studio owned by Pixie Elpis.

● **What makes it different:** There's no alcohol, and kids are welcome. It's more about learning to paint.

● **Contact:** [www.theartistinme.us/](http://www.theartistinme.us/) or 559-367-2084.

### Blending Palettes

● **Where:** 3332 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia

● **Type:** Small business.

● **What makes it different:** *You are welcome to interpret the painting in your own way.*

● **Contact:** [www.blendingpalettes.com](http://www.blendingpalettes.com) or 559-372-9855.

### Brush & Easel Gallery

● **Where:** 1476 W. Shaw Ave.

● **Type:** Art gallery with scheduled events and private parties.

● **What makes it different:** Participants are provided with an inspiration photo and each painting turns out different, with the owner guiding students through it. She also offers sessions to paint teapots, ceramic hearts or other items.

Contact: [www.facebook.com/brushandeaselgallery](http://www.facebook.com/brushandeaselgallery) or 559-269-5512.

### Coat of Many Colors

● **Where:** Events are held at Yosemite Falls Cafe, used books stores, naval bases, etc. in Fresno and the South Valley.

● **Type:** Owned by Michelle Stevens.

● **What makes it different:** You'll find abstract paintings here. Plus, her events aren't too rowdy, but they do have fun and she hosts family events.

● **Contact:** [www.coatofmanycolors.name](http://www.coatofmanycolors.name) or 559-362-7865.

### Paint Nite

● **Where:** Held at various restaurants and bars in the Valley.

● **Type:** National company.

● **What makes it different:** Paint Nite holds multiple events on the same night and sells out quickly.

● **Contact:**

<https://paintnite.com>

### Pinot's Palette

● **Where:** 6763 N. Palm Ave.

● **Type:** Franchise owned by local couple scheduled to open in April.

● **What makes it different:** Bar with drinks, coffee, an open studio and a private party room for 32.

● **Contact:**

[www.PinotsPalette.com/fresno](http://www.PinotsPalette.com/fresno) or 559-238-5545.

### Sublime Time

● **Where:** Sublime Time Studio #12 at the M Street Arts Complex.

● **Type:** Solo teacher in her artist studio.

● **What makes it different:** Family friendly. Bring your own wine.

● **Contact:**

[Sublimetimefun.com](http://Sublimetimefun.com) or 559-999-6604.

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THEY'RE ALL SO  
DIFFERENT. THEY ALL  
HAVE THEIR OWN  
FLAIR.

*Michelle Stevens, Coat of Many  
Colors*



CRAIG MOHLRUES cmo@fresnobee.com

Participants wave their canvases to dry the background paint while learning to paint at a Paint Nite class at DiCicco's in Old Town Clovis. The class encourages participants to get a drink at the bar and "drink creatively."



**Frankie  
Rodriguez, of  
Fresno, has a  
glass of wine at  
Sublime Time.**

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marlo