

WEB EXCLUSIVE: Paint Nite brings rookie artists, friends, and couples to local pubs

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By JENNIFER CAMPBELL



Instructor Olga Klimova talks participants through the process of recreating "Italy" at Paint Nite at the Clocktower Pub in Westboro

It's a Monday night and the ClockTower Pub in Westboro has had a makeover. Instead of sports fans watching the Sens on mammoth screens, rows of 35 easels and canvases line the back room. It looks more like a kindergarten room than a pub.

At the head of the class, instructor [Olga Klimova](#) is handing out aprons and paper plates covered with blobs of paint. Red, yellow, blue, black and white. That's it. Those are all the colours these budding Picassos will need for tonight's lesson/creation.

Their mission? To recreate a painting from [Paint Nite's](#) (their spelling) gallery. Tonight's painting is (not-so-creatively) called "Italy." It's a silhouette of a big-wheeled bicycle leaning against a sunny yellow brick wall. The budding artists — all but three are women, the average age is 30 — wield paint brushes, wine glasses, and a positive attitude to go with their lack of experience. Only one says she's had formal training; the others are complete newbies.

In spite of its questionable spelling and boiler-plate painting designs (local artists such as Klimova must choose a painting to teach from a gallery prescribed by Paint Nite), the Boston-headquartered company is now global. It's been in Ottawa — operating out of bars and restaurants downtown and as far afield as Orleans and Kanata — for a year, but it also has chapters in China, Australia, Ghana, Hong Kong, South Africa, and the U.K. It's in Canada's largest cities and even some smaller spots in Ontario (think Peterborough.)

Michelle Madill, a nurse who's having her first baby in a month, was there with her friends Kristan Wadden and Connie Tuttle, who was six days away from giving birth.

"We're trying to get lots of girl time in before they deliver," Wadden says with a laugh.

One row over, Karen Maw, a banker by day, admits she's developed a bit of a Paint Nite addiction. "This is my third time," Maw says. "The reason I like is that you get to see other people's creations and I like that I don't have to clean up afterwards."



Michelle Madill



Grace Dicks

Natalie and Phil Desjardins came to Paint Nite as a couple — he, who works in security at Fisheries and Oceans, bought it as a gift for her, a stay-at-home mom to their two young children. Asked what they'll do with two of the same painting, she says: "We'll hang them both in the garage. Or maybe the better one will make it to the laundry room."

Asked why he bought the gift, he replies: "Because I'm in love with her and she likes to paint." (Aw!)



Olga Klimova

There are two other couples in the room. Gabriel and Marta — who wouldn't give their last names — made it a date night when Marta's friend cancelled. Grace Dicks and Phil Champagne, sitting across from them, ended up there thanks to Dicks. "I thought he was going to be mad at me," she says. He smiles and shrugs.

Across the room, Melanie Champigny and Meg Rose are also having a girls' night. Rose bought it as a Christmas gift for the two, after seeing a half-price offer on Groupon, making it a cheap way for the teachers to escape their sons.

A ticket to Paint Nite, whose tagline is "drink creatively", retails for \$45 plus tax but using Climova's discount code (Olga20), the artistically inclined can save \$20 per class. Check out the schedule on the [Paint Nite website](#).