



**ART JAM STUDIO (above)**  
An extra room in a centre offering computer courses was turned into an art jam studio in February last year. Participants can choose guided or non-guided sessions. Instructor Michelle Pareno, 40, a Filipino and Singapore permanent resident, has no formal art training, but has won accolades for art, including taking second place in a poster-making contest by the National Museum of the Philippines in 2004.  
**Where:** 8 Burn Road, 05-10  
**When:** 1 to 3.30pm and 6.30 to 9pm (Mondays to Wednesdays; noon to 2.30pm (Saturdays and Sundays); closed on Thursdays, Fridays and public holidays.  
**Cost:** \$30 (non-guided) to \$50 (guided) a person a session  
**Info:** Call 6655-2811 or go to [www.artjam.asia/contacts.html](http://www.artjam.asia/contacts.html) to register



ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KHA, NG SUI LIAN

## LET'S JAM WITH PAINT

Social painting as a pastime is catching on as more art jamming studios spring up, some with cafes included



**Kezia Toh**  
A weekend coffee run at a hipster-style cafe turned fund manager Isaac Chua into quite the artist, despite his never having wielded a paintbrush before.  
This is because Mr Chua, 30, who visited Cups N Canvas in a converted 1950s Art Deco building along Selegie Road in June last year, decided to pop into the cafe's adjoining art studio as well.  
There, the cafe offers art jamming, where individuals and groups of friends can paint whatever they like and as much as they want for a fee, with art materials provided.  
On his first try, Mr Chua produced a painting of his dog (right) in three hours and on a return visit, he painted a leopard. He is no Van Gogh or Lucian Freud, but the results were fairly life-like.  
"I was actually quite surprised and impressed with myself," he says. The works now hang in his home.  
While this freestyle painting activity has been around for a while, it is moving beyond sterile studios to more evocative places such as a bohemian cafe, a pretty tea lounge and even a sleek studio-cum-restaurant with a glittering waterfront view in Sentosa Cove.  
To get a leg-up on the competition, art jam establishments are also opening more branches and giving patrons perks such as complimentary lacquering of finished artwork and free drinks.  
Owners of these businesses say the "art jam" moniker came about because it is about amateur artists experimenting in a relaxed atmosphere, like musicians informally playing together.  
In this region, the concept came from Hong Kong in 2000, where Meli Melo Limited claims on its website to have created art jamming as a way to combine art and networking. The company now operates an art jamming centre in Central, Hong Kong.  
In Singapore, there are at least eight art jamming centres, seven of which started offering the activity between 2011 and last year.  
These studios typically provide basics such as

paint, canvas, an easel and an apron. Five of them also sell food and drinks, and they all play music in the background.  
You can choose to bring a reference image or to paint freestyle. Guidance from instructors is optional, though five studios offer them on standby.  
After the session, art jammers can take their work home.  
The newest kid on the block is Museo, a casual fine-dining establishment by the water in Sentosa Cove, which has art jamming facilities and opened in March last year.  
In keeping with the spiffy environment, the easels are elegant \$400 constructions, says director Ivan Teo, 38. Participants pay about \$38+ for a session with no time limit, comparable to rates at other social painting joints.  
Mr Teo explains: "Food and art are therapeutic, so combining these two makes for an attractive concept, giving people the freedom to express themselves with their dinner companions, especially when there is alcohol thrown in the mix."  
He is also behind Arteastiq tea lounge at Mandarin Gallery, where easels are set up alongside pretty cocktails and dessert sets.  
Mr Teo got the idea from his school days, when the interior design graduate sneaked into art studios regularly to paint with friends at Lasalle College of the Arts and later at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia, where he did his degree.  
"The experience was so enjoyable, so I thought: Why not commercialise this?" says the businessman, whose art jamming ventures have seen increasing demand.  
Arteastiq, for example, started with about 300 customers a month, but that number has risen by about fourfold, he says.  
Meanwhile, Museo has about 300 art jammers a month now, compared to about 100 initially.  
To rise above the competition from art jamming joints that also serve food and drinks, stand-alone studios are offering extra perks.  
My Art Studio in Serangoon Gardens, for example, lacquers jammers' works for free and gives them complimentary hot beverages.  
Its business director William Lee, 42, started art jamming sessions in 2012 with about 30 customers a month. This figure has since tripled, he says.  
Meanwhile, Arthaus in Bukit Timah, which started in June 2011, gives guidance to art jammers, such as encouraging them to think out of the box.  
Building artists are guided to use their imagination with pieces, creating art with unorthodox materials such as a window wiper and the stitching



Both adults and children can paint to their heart's content at Art Jam Studio.

lining of a baseball, says Ms Carolyn Law, 32, who has a master's degree in fine arts from Lasalle.  
She runs the studio with Ms Aisha Ramat, 33, a Lasalle graduate with a diploma in fine arts.  
Studios are also looking at opening more outlets to tap the burgeoning demand. Arthaus is considering another studio in Serangoon, while My Art Studio is scouting for another shop in the eastern part of Singapore.  
However, operators say it still takes some cajoling to fully immerse participants in artistic creation.  
Some beginners, for example, shy away from easels set near an open window to avoid having

passers-by gaze at their work, says Ms Linda Koay, 40, who runs Cups N Canvas. Her studio-cafe opened in September 2012 and sees a constant flow of about 50 art jammers a month.  
To put customers at ease, art entrepreneur Teh Chan Kerk, 44, plays a selection of jazz, techno and new age music to get his patrons' creative juices flowing.  
He runs studio-cafe My Art Space in Istana Park and started art jamming sessions in 2008 after a client who had been to Hong Kong told him about the activity.  
Mr Teh says: "Art jamming is art exploration - helping people to discover themselves in a free and easy way." He gets about 100 customers a month, compared to just 20 when he started.  
Participants say the appeal lies in the social experience and creative outlet offered by freestyle painting.  
For Ms Chee Ee Lin, 38, head of operations at a financial services company, art jamming is a family bonding pastime.  
She and her husband, a 42-year-old IT sales executive, have visited Museo in Sentosa Cove twice with their four-year-old daughter.  
Says Ms Chee: "It is nice to get out of the main island, have dinner, then paint - without having to clear up the mess."  
She prefers that her child engages in creative activities such as art instead of hi-tech distractions such as the iPad. Her daughter likes to execute brightly coloured paintings of her favourite cartoon characters, such as the minions of the Despicable Me movie franchise or Hello Kitty.  
Housewife Glacy Soh was initially apprehensive about picking up the brush in July last year when a friend recommended that she try art jamming at Arthaus.  
The experience of following a rigid art syllabus geared for the examinations back in her schooldays had turned Ms Soh, 52, off art.  
But art jamming has been a game-changer. She has re-discovered her passion and has even sold some of her oil paintings - she paints people, old buildings and nature.  
She says of the art jamming sessions: "It is lovely here because I focus on painting what I love, the way I love to do it."

**MUSEO (left)**  
This casual fine-dining establishment and bar, which opened in March last year, has a spiffy art studio built on a platform, which gives art jammers an unobstructed sea view. No guidance is provided.  
**Where:** Quayside Isle, 31 Ocean Way, 01-22, Sentosa Cove  
**When:** 11.30am to 10pm (Sundays to Thursdays), 11.30am to 1am (Fridays and Saturdays)  
**Cost:** \$18+ a person (no time limit)  
**Info:** Call 6734-8066 or go to [mu-se-o.com/artjam](http://mu-se-o.com/artjam)



**ARTHHAUS (above)**  
Started in June 2011 by Lasalle College of the Arts fine art graduates Carolyn Law and Aisha Ramat, this art studio also offers art classes for adults and children and portfolio preparation for art college applicants. The founders are the instructors.  
**Where:** 901A Bukit Timah Road  
**When:** 9am to 7pm daily  
**Cost:** \$370 for a painting workshop of six sessions of two hours each, and \$150 for a drawing workshop of six sessions of two hours each. Each workshop takes a maximum of 12 people, with two instructors.  
**Info:** Call 9023-0458 or 9723-4084, or go to [www.arthaus.com.sg](http://www.arthaus.com.sg)



**MY ART SPACE (above)**  
Art entrepreneur Teh Chan Kerk, who goes by the moniker Chankerk, runs this studio-cafe, which was founded in 2005 but started art jams from 2008. He runs art exploration sessions, with guidance available according to each participant's chosen medium and art style.  
**Where:** Istana Park, 31 Orchard Road  
**When:** Studio visit by appointment only  
**Cost:** \$60 a person for a 2 1/2-hour session, \$150 a person for a package of eight sessions  
**Info:** Call 6222-1062 or go to [www.myartspace.com.sg](http://www.myartspace.com.sg)

**CUPS N CANVAS (left)**  
This art cafe opened in September 2012 in a conserved Art Deco shophouse. Indie vibe aside - mismatched furniture, a vintage signboard and bare concrete floors - the space is divided into a cafe and an art studio. Art jammers can get painting tips from Lasalle College of the Arts undergraduate Liao Jun Hui, 30, and Chinese artist Leo Liu Quan Dai, 37.  
**Where:** 139 Selegie Road  
**When:** 10am to 10pm (Tuesdays to Thursdays), 9am to 11pm (Fridays and Saturdays), 9am to 8pm (Sundays), closed on Mondays  
**Cost:** About \$60 a person for a three-hour session, monthly packages are available  
**Info:** Call 6884-0855 or go to [www.cupscanvas.com](http://www.cupscanvas.com)

**MY ART STUDIO**  
Business director William Lee founded the studio in February 2010 largely for children's art classes, but extended its scope in 2012 to include art jamming for adults because parents and corporate clients were asking about the social painting experience. Sessions are guided by instructors who have at least a diploma in interior design or fine arts.  
**Where:** 45 Burghley Drive, 01-13  
**When:** 10am to 6.30pm daily  
**Cost:** About \$40 for a three-hour session  
**Info:** Call 6737-3760 or go to [www.myartstudio.sg](http://www.myartstudio.sg)

**ARTEASTIQ**  
This pretty tea lounge with Marxx designer furniture serves a range of alcohol, desserts and fruit tea sets. An art jam space for 30 painters, which started in August 2011, is set by the side. No guidance is provided.  
**Where:** Mandarin Gallery, 333A Orchard Road, 04-14/15  
**When:** 11am to 9pm daily (tea lounge). Art jam sessions are from 11am to 2pm, 2.30 to 4.30pm and 6 to 9pm daily  
**Cost:** \$48 a person a session  
**Info:** Call 6235-8705 or e-mail [mandarinalgallery@arteastiq.com](mailto:mandarinalgallery@arteastiq.com)

**HONG SHI YI**  
This dim sum restaurant with the in-house Gallery



**Where:** 798, named after the famed Beijing art district, started an art jam section in October 2012. The art jam section is a franchise of Arteastiq at Mandarin Gallery. No guidance is provided.  
**Where:** Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Boulevard, 02-10/20  
**When:** 11am to 10pm daily (restaurant), 11am to 9pm (art gallery). Painting sessions are from 11am to 2pm, 2.30 to 5.30pm and 6 to 9pm daily  
**Cost:** \$48 a person for a three-hour session  
**Info:** Call 6333-5117 or go to [www.hongshiyi.com](http://www.hongshiyi.com)



My Art Studio (left) has instructors on hand to offer guidance while at Arteastiq (above), participants are on their own. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ARTHHAUS, ART JAM STUDIO, MY ART STUDIO, MY ART SPACE, ISAAC CHUA, THE NEW PAPER FILE

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