

Did You Know?

Ease Into Painting

"When was the last time you painted?" San Francisco-based painter **Ann Rea** asks this question of everyone who attends one of her collaborative canvas sessions. And often the response she receives is that they haven't held a paintbrush since childhood.

Getting guests to reconnect with their inner artist is Rea's mission at post-meeting parties and receptions. She begins by creating a charcoal sketch, then has participants fill in the lines with paint, one section at a time. Even with guidance, some guests—many of whom are successful business people—hesitate.

"These are powerful, decisive people who all of a sudden get overwhelmed with fear," Rea says. "It's fear of failure, fear of making a mistake, but I always tell them that there are no unfixable mistakes in painting."

As soon as participants get over their initial anxiety, they often enjoy it so much that they find it hard to stop. At the end, they sign the back of the canvas, and it's sold in a silent auction. Meeting planners

can request Rea to host a session at their event, and as long as the final bid for the painting exceeds the teaching fee, there is no cost beyond the art supplies. Past sessions have been held at the de Young Museum in San Francisco and Bouchon Bistro in Beverly Hills, Calif. Rea calls it "edutainment," meaning guests not only learn about painting but also participate in creating it. This appreciation for the holistic experience stems from Rea's mantra, "Savor the colors of the moment."

Rea embodied this motto when she traded her corporate career for art. She graduated from art school, but put her artistic interests aside to work for corporate America. She recalls reassessing her own life after talking with a friend who was recovering from stage four breast cancer. "I remember thinking, 'I'm miserable too. How long do I have?'" Rea says. With renewed purpose, she quit her job at the end of 2004 to pursue painting full time, with the encouragement of renowned painters Gregory Kondos and Wayne Thiebaud. When asked where



she got the courage to make such a drastic career change, Rea jokes, "Because [at my old job] I was losing my ever-loving mind!"

Today, Rea uses this renewed sense of purpose to help guests uncover their artistic talent and to provide them with a new answer to the question, "When was the last time you painted?" annrea.com

A scenic view of a mountain range with a large sign for Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The sign is yellow with a black border and contains the text: "Inspiration comes easy, if you know where to look. Call 1-800-343-1475 or visit us at gatlinburg-tn.com". Below the text is the Gatlinburg Tennessee logo, which features a bear and the words "GATLINBURG TENNESSEE". The background shows a vast mountain range under a clear sky, with evergreen trees in the foreground.