

Pretty as a Painting

WEDDING PAINTERS ARE ENJOYING A BOOM IN BUSINESS, AS BRIDES CLAMOR FOR THEIR PERSONAL, ARTISTIC TOUCH.

By Lisa Arcella

Queens of England have long commissioned artists to paint important wedding ceremonies. Now brides in the Capital Region are enjoying the trend, regally having their “I do”s painted—*live*—as it is all happening. Not only do the couple get a unique keepsake to cherish forever, but their wedding guests love the novelty, too.

While even the modern-day version of wedding painting is not exactly a new phenomenon, Mark DeSilva, the creative force behind Live Wedding

rain, rain, go away Mark DeSilva painted this couple in the Saratoga Casino Hotel’s garden, even though garden wedding photos were rained out.





Painting by Mark, has seen his business boom in recent years. “I have been doing this since 2009,” says the painter, who has recently done weddings in Lake Placid and Albany. “Now every weekend I am someplace new. I used to do about 40 or 50 paintings in a year, but last year it was 80. One weekend I had four weddings in four different locations!”

Choosing your live painter can be a huge decision, as the area’s artists vary widely in their approach, artistry and even how they interact with guests.

“Live painting is not easy!” says Saratoga’s Sharon Bolton. “It takes more set-up than you would think and on the day, I am usually on my feet for 10 hours straight. As you paint, you are there to entertain the guests. This is my favorite part as I am a bit of a party girl, and I love people and getting chatty. I spend a good eight hours finishing the job in my studio, but the extra time and care make for the best end result. After all, you want the couple to hang it up and enjoy it for eternity.”



Life is a canvas (FROM TOP) Saratogian Sharon Bolton calls painting such weddings as this Albany one “non-stop, pure love energy—a love high!”; Erika Angeli captured this couple’s first dance; Bolton’s easel ready for showtime; (OPPOSITE) Erin Crowley says wedding guests think her live painting is “cool” and check in on it throughout the night.

Wedding artists can capture portraits of the ceremony, the reception or even the first dance, depending on the preference of the couple. To make it all happen, they arrive at the venue several hours before to set up an easel and start work on the background of the painting. When the actual moment that’ll appear in the painting happens, they usually take hundreds of photos of it and then work from those images as the night goes on. Afterwards, they can add in special people the couple may want included in the artwork that will last a lifetime. They can even add in things that weren’t necessarily there, in a pinch. For example, rain prevented one couple, who were married at the Saratoga Casino Hotel, from getting their dream painting set in the lovely garden there. So DeSilva took pictures and *voilà*—the garden magically appears in their painting.

Prices tend to run in the neighborhood of \$1500 to \$3000 depending on the size of the canvas. And even though most nuptials include a photographer, Erin Crowley, who recently painted

a beautiful ceremony at the Hall of Springs, says a personalized portrait offers something other than a still image. “We capture a very different feeling,” she says. “It’s an impressionistic, personal look at your wedding,”

Wedding painter Erika Angeli says that as an artist, working in front of a room full of guests brings her so much joy that it’s perfect for the mood of a wedding. “The adrenaline of painting in front of a crowd gets me out of my own head and gives me the ability to be hyper-focused on painting what I see,” she says. “In order to fully encapsulate the energy and feeling of their day, the majority of my paintings are completed by the end of the event. My heart feels so full when I hear the different reactions from wedding guests. I often hear that what I am doing is truly special and meaningful, and I believe this to be true after I see the reaction from my couples at the end of the night. Every painting completed holds a little piece of me.”



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