

Bay Area Free Art Exchange (BAFAE)

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registered **FreeArtExchange.com** and **FreeArtExchange.org** with NameSecure

The core concept is simple: Free Art!

BAFAE is a grassroots organization that organizes the exchange of art works plus art supplies/raw materials/tools, plus related services (incl. instruction, classes, lectures) , among local artists and the community at large.

The BAFAE exchange takes place in a shop (part of a larger facility that would include a shared art studio) -- or other appropriate, available venue -- where people donate or take as needed:

- art works* (all media, all styles, all periods)
- art raw materials* (including paper ephemera like you'd find at garage sales, flea markets: vintage magazines, posters, post cards, etc., that artists and artisans often use in projects)
- art supplies/tools/equipment*: paint, brushes, paper, canvas, frames, etc.

Customers donate what they don't want or need, take what they want for free.

In addition to this free give and take, BAEFE encourages barter arrangements among artists who wish to provide goods/services to each other or with the public.

The shop includes space to exhibit and sell a curated selection of the donated works/goods gleaned from the donations.

(One of the Free Book Exchange founders here in El Cerrito told me that approx. 5% of the books that people donate turn out to be collectible, they sell them (on EBay and elsewhere online) to cover fixed costs of the business (rent, utilities, etc.)

BAFAE organizes events, at the shop or elsewhere in the community, to include:

- exchange of art works, raw materials, supplies, tools
- art exhibits
- sales of curated art works; selected supplies & raw materials
- classes/lessons/lectures (offered on cash or barter basis)
- food (local retailers, restaurants, pop-up restaurant, food trucks, caterers)
- arts performance (music, dance, comedy, other performing arts)
- parties, dances

Based on some feedback I've gotten so far, we might start organizing soon for a Free Art event to take place fall 2012, inviting artists locally and from all over the SF Bay Area to donate art works for a gallery show (need to find a venue) where the visitors take away the art for free - that's a concept that the local broadcast and online media will pick up on, I think, especially for an event that would be taking place at the beginning of the Christmas shopping season where the focus is on buying gifts, not taking them out of the stores without paying for them.

With a few people to help organize and work at it, I think it could be possible to do such a "free art" gallery exhibit in the context of a kind of "swap meet" where artists also exchange or give away art supplies, raw materials, tools, equipment they don't need or want, and maybe get a food truck to roll on over, get some local musicians up on a stage...

Moving into the future, BAEFE could evolve as a group whose members pay cash dues or contribute goods/services and earn "credits" good for exchange among members. These exchanges could eventually be codified in an app (perhaps with social media "game" elements) that would let members and group organizers keep track of who donates what and gains how many credits in exchange.

Scenario: Artist X needs helpers/interns on a project, invites BAEFE members, helpers/interns earn credits in exchange for their work on the project, in addition to the experience they gain and skills they may acquire while working on the project. The BAEFE App keeps track of it all.

BAEFE could serve a "Kickstarter" function on the local level, and could also use its clout (at some future moment when BAEFE might have clout) to promote projects through Kickstarter or other such platform out there.

I'm meeting on Feb 28 with 10 local artists, people who have been involved in a variety of arts-related activities here in the Greater El Cerrito Metropolitan Area.

I'm hoping we can start organizing regular exchanges as a 1-time event to test potential for a ongoing activities/

If no other venue emerges, I would clear out and dedicate our 2-car garage as a starting location and see about setting up a table at the entrance to Safeway to let locals know about it. Without a fixed shop location, it's possible to envision doing this like a little swap meet outdoors somewhere -- record collectors used to gather regularly in the parking lot of Downhome Records (on San Pablo Ave., the main drag here in El Cerrito) on weekends.

BAEFE builds on the example of the Bay Area Free Book Exchange (here in EC <http://siliconvalleywatch.com/2012/02/unload-your-unwanted-books-or-pick-up-more-for-free-on-saturdays-and-sundays-at-el-cerritos-free-book-store/>)

Also some elements in common with "The Reading Room" art project at UC Berkeley, blogged at

SVW <http://t.co/w2z6zFB> That project lets people trade a book from their personal library for one of the books on display, in the context of a schedule of poetry readings. free art/supplies exchnng + gallery to sell some donated art.

All feedback welcome!