

Art Break Day: A chance to take a moment to create

Mary Ellen Hunt, Special to The Chronicle
Thursday, September 1, 2011

Kids, parents, men and women on the street - pretty much anyone could use a 15-minute break in the day to bring a little more art into their lives. That's the premise behind Take 5: Art Break Day, a one-day event that will take place Friday in five cities around the Bay Area.

A few minutes to sketch with a marker, to color in a still life with pastels, or to create an abstract expression or a portrait of a friend is all it may take to kick-start that mysterious thing called creativity in your brain, or just give a busy parent a delightful rest stop in the middle of the day.

It's the first year for Art Break Day, although artist Lauren Odell Usher - who, with Lisa Rasmussen, co-founded the sponsoring organization Art Is Moving - says she hopes it will become an annual tradition on the first weekend of September.

The idea for a daylong "art for the people" event grew out of a project that Usher and Rasmussen began in 2008 called Art Cart, a mobile art-making station that they would push along Oakland's Telegraph Avenue. The idea of making art free and accessible to a wide audience of people really appealed to the pair.

Some 20 volunteers will operate the five sites for Art Break Day - Justin Herman Plaza in San Francisco, San Rafael's City Plaza, the downtown Garden Park in Richmond, Oakland's Ogawa Plaza, and Vine Street and Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley - from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., staffing a couple of tables and helping provide would-be artists with paints, pencils, pastels, markers and whatever other tools they might require to create a mini masterpiece.

Given the scope of Art Break Day, it's been something of a juggling act to organize and get the proper permits, although Usher says that they've been working with community organizations in each city and that's helped keep them far under their initial \$50,000 budget. Site fees and permits have been donated by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, for instance, as well as Berkeley's North Shattuck Association, the Richmond Main Street Initiative, the Downtown Oakland Association and the city of San Rafael. And the project has gotten a boost from local donations like that of Berkeley's Artist & Craftsman Supply, which pitched in art supplies for the day.

"It's been hard organizing, but we want it to be really successful," says Usher, who was cutting paper for the event even as we spoke. "It's our baby."



Usher also notes that the first 200 people at each site will receive a free gift: a 2-by-3-inch box that Usher calls "Art in Your Pocket." Inside is a mini art kit with small pieces of paper, a Sharpie pen, some oil pastels, a pencil and an eraser - a perfect size for the purse or glove compartment, for those moments when you need another little art break.

9 a.m.-5 p.m. Fri. Free. Various locations; check website for details. www.artismovingnow.com.

E-mail comments to 96hours@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/09/01/NSJL1KRCBV.DTL>

This article appeared on page **G - 17** of the San Francisco Chronicle

© 2011 Hearst Communications Inc. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Contact](#)