

Dickson Schneider

Exhibition Dates: March 1st, 8th, 15th, 21st

Saturday, March 1st, 2014 3-5pm
Opening Reception and Conversation
with Dongsoo Shin

In Supply and Demand, the Free Art Project, Santa Clara, the Gallery will be showing 10 of Schneider's works each day. The work is free to the public to look at but also free to take home. The title indicates a wrinkle for this show - there is a limited supply of free art available each day. This idea reflects Schneider's curiosity about the act of giving - he has never given away all of the work he has made for an exhibition and wonders what it means to restrict the supply. New work will not be put up as the gallery is emptied until the next day.



Art for Free, and Free for Art

Many would say that by definition, an artist is creative and in possession or pursuit of a free spirit. But what does it mean to be free-spirited? For some it could mean free of reality, or free of techniques. Possibly free of bias, or even free of politics. For Bay Area painter Dickson Schneider, it means “economically” free. Through “the free art project,” this artist gives his paintings away for free.

A nice piece of contemporary art for free? Now, here’s an event an economist like me, who’s also interested in contemporary works, would not want to miss. A few days later, I dash to a San Francisco gallery, to claim a piece of my own. That empty spot in my house would be no longer. And in the process of making that selection, I learn something unexpected: few other pieces have been grabbed! Now why is that?

According to artist Schneider, and Takeshi Moro, another artist and organizer of today’s event, despite apparent appreciation for the paintings, people are reluctant to take something home for free. Does not charging diminish the art’s value in the eye of the beholder? The economist in me wonders if it reduces demand for the work? While “giving it away” is intrinsic to Schneider’s art and purpose, does it interfere with preconceived notions of a public accustomed to paying for goods, including art?

For this artist, giving his paintings away brings a sense of relief and satisfaction. For him, it’s the imagination, exploration, and creative processes from which inherent value is derived. Affixing a dollar value to the product is superfluous.

Picasso said, “The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls.” In Dickson Schneider’s work we have the chance to freely (literally and figuratively) enjoy his gifts, while affording him the freedom to create. And my once-bare wall’s now graced with a painting I love!

Dongsoo Shin

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