

children's PRESSLINE

Children get Time In with art

By **GABRIELLE MILNER**

Special to the AmNews

Four-year-old Francisco, who only recently started to speak English, rarely engages in class discussion and usually responds to questions with only a word or two. Yet, after a scheduled trip to the Haunch of Venison art gallery in Midtown Manhattan with his class, Francisco could not wait to share his impression about the excursion.

"I liked the painting where people raised their hands!" said the usually shy Francisco, as he eagerly spoke in class

the program is to help foster art appreciation and inspire independent thinking through hands-on and visual arts, movement and music.

The Time In initiative is just one of HiArt!'s programs. HiArt! is a program founded by Cyndie Bellen-Berthézène in 1997 that she said introduces children as young as 15 months old to "high-art aesthetics."

Four years ago, Bellen-Berthézène established Time In with the goal of enabling young children with limited resources to benefit from intense involvement with the

is that "children who can control their inner lives and who trust their imaginations become leaders."

Nickolas Lascot, a Time In art teacher, said, "An event like [the gala]...can be an avenue for...players and policymakers to voice their support for organizations such as this."

He added, "If these people see what we can do, appreciate

what we do and go back and support us either by making policies or donating financially or telling people about us and getting other people involved, then [the gala] is a resounding success."

Bellen-Berthézène said, "The ideal would be if we raise enough money to start [the program] in Pre-K and keep them [the same students]

through fifth grade."

"Our little kids do exactly the same things as a Christie's or Sotheby's intern," she added. "They see all the big shows...it doesn't matter if it's Chelsea...the Brooklyn Museum, MoMA, Guggenheim...we take them out of their natural habitat."

Many parents whose children participated in HiArt! now volunteer for Time In. Kathleen Robinson, one of those parent volunteers who now also serves on the gala's benefit committee, said she thinks that all children should have access to this type of program. What impresses Robinson about Time In is that students have the opportunity to see works of art and then are encouraged to do their own artwork.

"Some of the kids never had their own writing pads or owned art supplies, and never [before] had a sense that they could create beautiful work," she said, adding that the program allows participants to gain a sense of ownership of their artwork. "I think to gain that kind of confidence in their ability to create is translated into the classroom."

Robinson also said that in society, "we underestimate young people and what they can appreciate and what they can get out of the arts." However, she says that Bellen-Berthézène possesses the insight to encourage arts education that recognizes and values the perceptions as well as the abilities of young children.

"In observations, you'd be so surprised to listen to children [describe] a piece of artwork," said Robinson. "They can really bring a lot to it," said Robinson.

Markarian said that her students could not afford arts education such as that provided by Time In. "It is basically these children's only experience of being exposed to the best of the world.

"They get the chance to freely express themselves without restrictions in their artwork and...sharing their ideas about their artwork is important in [their] language development."

Additional reporting by Jordan Barsky, Anna Bernstein, and Mahalah King-Slutsky.



Students in the Time In program are not only exposed to the visual arts, but other fine arts as well. They spend three months focusing on one opera, scene by scene.

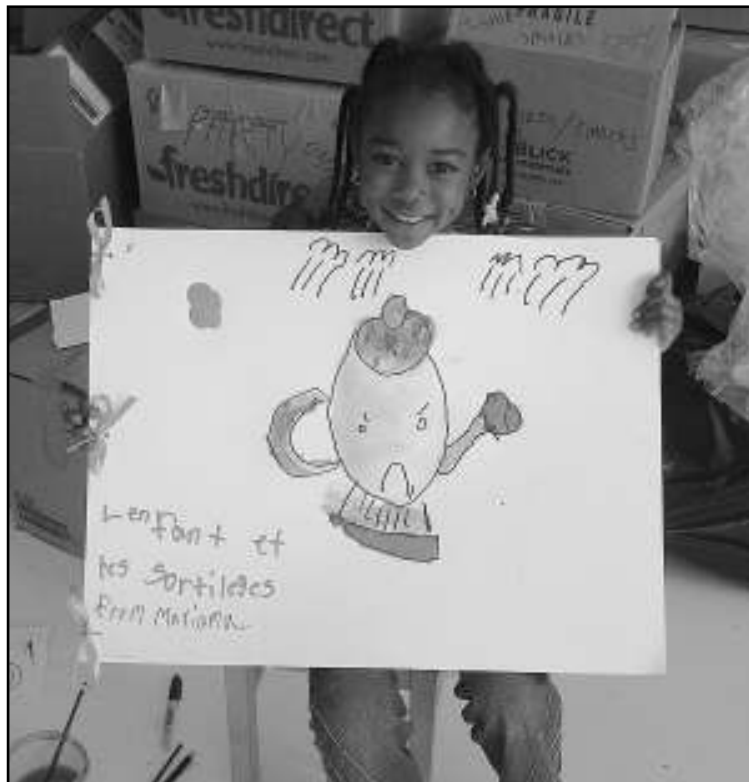
about artwork he observed at the gallery.

Francisco's teacher, Emma Markarian, was amazed by Francisco's enthusiastic response. "I can already see how much joy and excitement the program brings to my students," said Markarian, who teaches pre-kindergarten at P.S. 063 Author's Academy in the South Bronx. This program, the Time In Children's Arts Initiative, is an outreach arts-immersion program. Participants in Time In leave school with their class for one half-day every week for the school year and are brought to various museums and galleries throughout the city. The goal of

arts. It presently is offered to children who attend P.S. 241 Family Academy and P.S. M242 Gwendolyn Powell Brown Computer School in Harlem and P.S. 063.

In today's economy, with many arts programs in city public schools facing budget cuts, Time In, which is for the most part privately funded, provides a much-needed service.

To help raise funds for Time In, an auction and gala was held on February 1 at the Haunch of Venison. Its theme was "Changing the World through Art." As reflected in the gala invitation, an underlying philosophy of the program



Mariama, a student at P.S. 241 Family Academy, created a teapot scene at her Time In class in response to Maurice Ravel's opera "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges."



Students in the Time In program visit various galleries and studios around New York City and also have the opportunity to create their own work.