

GAGOSIAN

Creators

Taryn Simon and Free Arts NYC Give Arts Mentorship to Kids
The multidisciplinary artist teams up with Free Arts NYC to expand the curriculum and artistic mediums of the program.

Diana Shi



courtesy Free Arts NYC

For 20 years, the organization Free Arts NYC has helped children in underserved New York communities discover their artistic passions and connect with the broader art ecosystem. Started in Los Angeles, the program's New York expansion reached new avenues of creative mentorship in the late-1990s under the direction of its executive director, Liz Hopfan. Familiar and well-known names from the art world, including Dan Colen and Rashid Johnson, have contributed their guidance and expertise.

In its latest instructional partnership, the organization welcomes multidisciplinary artist Taryn Simon—whose most recent works are showing now at Gagosian Hong Kong—to the impressive list of mentors.

Over a two-week period, Simon created and executed a workshop for a group of 12 teens to work through themes and techniques taken from her 2013 archival image installation, *The Picture*

Collection. The project emphasized that each young artist weave their personal influences and life experiences into their final pieces, culminating in portfolios of their work. Simon welcomed the young artists into her studio, and guided them through a process of image selection through themes including "empowerment," "admiration," "ignorance," "ownership," and even, "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

Hopfan, speaking at a Free Arts gala in April, shared how the artist's contributions to the newest crop of Free Arts NYC students: "We were overwhelmed by Simon's commitment and dedication to this project at such a critical time for Free Arts—and for all arts programming. [...] It is artists like Taryn that can make the critical difference in a young person's life. She helped spark ideas, inspired them to think differently and was their mentor. She gave them a glimpse into an art form they did not know and a career path they didn't realize existed."

Work by Simon's 12 student mentees debuted at a Free Arts NYC auction and were on view at the Mid-Manhattan Public Library in April 2017.