

A LONG ISLAND'S BEST SUCCESS STORY

In this centennial year, we asked Valley Stream Central High School alumnus Nicole Noel to share her experiences with The Heckscher Museum's prestigious high school program. Nicole Noel was the Celebrate Achievement Best in Show recipient in *Long Island's Best 2016*. She is currently working on a short film for her senior thesis at The School of Visual Arts, New York, majoring in Computer Graphics and Computer Art.

HMA: Nicole, are you still pursuing your art?

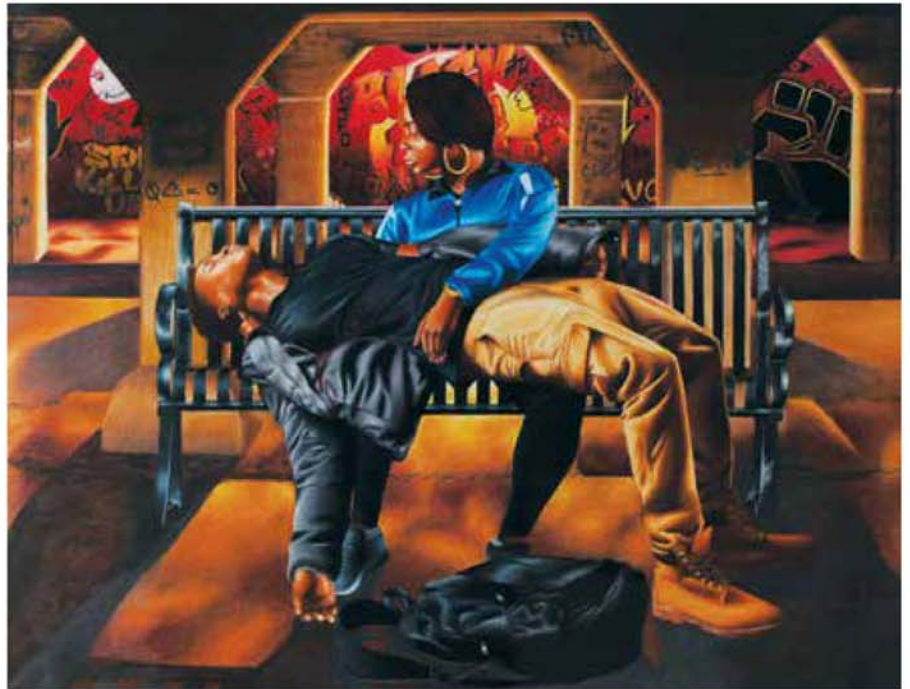
Nicole: Well, the short answer is yes! When I applied for *Long Island's Best*, I had only recently started taking my art skills seriously and traditional mediums were all I had available to me. Since then, I've found inspiration in lots of different things and I've turned more towards digital mediums. While I'm still doing art, my style and mediums are drastically different from when I won.

HMA: What life lessons did you learn during *Long Island's Best* that helped in school and beyond?

Nicole: Mostly lessons in work ethic. I put so much time into my piece but I was always plagued with thoughts like "What if it doesn't get accepted?" Thinking about my work probably gave me more fatigue than actually doing it. In time, I figured that I'd be more upset if I stopped, never to know what would come if I had not submitted something. I decided to continue because I like creating and telling stories. Even if nobody ever saw the piece, I'd be happy that I worked hard to make something I liked.

HMA: What was the best part of the experience for you?

Nicole: Definitely the people I got to meet. During the awards ceremony, there were



people from all over the New York area walking around. It was really my first interaction with a large part of the "art world." I remember it felt surreal to me because there weren't just artists there; there were doctors, bankers, and many students who would probably become something completely removed from an artistic field, but they all had a shared interest and a love that brought them together in this one place. I heard lots of stories and got lots of advice, not just for my art but for my life. That is the memory I cherish the most about being a part of *Long Island's Best*.

HMA: What advice would you give students who are considering applying to *Long Island's Best*?

Nicole: Whatever the theme may be, don't try so hard to push out a literal interpretation or something you think the judges would just want to see – consider making something that you'd like and that you'd want to see. You are likely going to put countless hours of your life into this, so when the time comes to submit your



TOP: Nicole Noel, *Another Pity*, colored pencil, *Long Island's Best* Celebrate Achievement Best in Show 2016. Nicole Noel, today.

piece you should hand in something that is special to you and that you're proud to have breathed life into.

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NICOLE NOEL