

# MassArt introduces high school students to careers in the arts with Artward Bound

By [Jeremy C. Fox](#) Globe Staff, Updated September 6, 2023, 4:15 p.m.



Mary K. Grant, president of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design spoke with Oji Miller, 16, during a reception at MassArt for the youth program Artward Bound. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Inside a white-walled gallery space within the Massachusetts College of Art and Design one recent Thursday, walls and pedestals held images of angels, witches, mermaids, and epic heroes, each formed by hand from molded clay, constructed of wires, drawn

onto paper, or crafted from seemingly random materials.

On one wall, roughly two dozen small clay figures sat lined up on a shelf, each identically posed with their right knees raised and hands clasped on their right thighs. Nearby, frantic figures wound from wildly looping metal wires cavorted and did battle across another narrow shelf.

Elsewhere in the gallery, a slender statuette formed from gray polymer clay raised delicately modeled arms into the air.

“I’m honestly proud of how I got the figure down,” said Oji Miller, 16, of Stoughton, the student artist who sculpted the piece. “This figure is based on the Black Swan, the ballerina from the movie. I really wanted to capture the figure of of a ballerina and get the proportions correct and everything.”



Oji Miller 16, discussed a figurine he made during a reception at MassArt youth program Artward Bound. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Miller is one of about 40 high school students participating this year in Artward Bound, a free, four-year college preparatory program that MassArt launched in 2011 to provide artistic training and academic support to Greater Boston high school students from low-income families, according to MassArt.

Artward Bound includes a six-week summer session with mornings devoted to academic subjects and afternoons spent making the art that was on display in the gallery. During the school year, Artward Bound students participate in academic sessions at least once a week and art education twice weekly, including trips to artists' studios, museums, and career-building workshops.

The program serves about 40 students this year, including 91 percent youth of color. Since its inception, 100 percent of participating students have graduated from high school and 96 percent have enrolled in college, MassArt said.

Most Artward Bound students are recruited from Boston Public Schools, and many go on to become the first in their families to go to college, according to Lyssa Palu-ay, dean of MassArt's Office of Justice, Equity, and Transformation. Along the way, students in the program become a powerful support system for each other, she said.

"The amount of time they spend with each other, it's very much like family," Palu-ay said. "It's a really strong sense of community. Over the pandemic, I think especially, as we were only able to meet online, there was high participation. I think students were missing that connection. They relied on each other a lot."

Now MassArt hopes to expand the program and reach more teens. The college recently announced that the Phyllis & Jerome Lyle Rappaport Foundation has awarded it a \$250,000 grant to support Artward Bound.

"This grant from the Rappaport Foundation is a huge boost to the program, because that allows us to think about how do we expand? How do we remove additional

barriers for students who might not even think that they can get here to come to Artward Bound program?” said Mary Grant, MassArt’s president. “To have that support from Rappaport and others who have stepped up to support the Artward Bound program is really encouraging and hopeful.”

The program has been life-changing for Quanyan Nelson, 24, who grew up in Dorchester and began participating almost a decade ago. Now Nelson is a senior at MassArt and a mentor in the program.

“It helped me in terms of being a finding my voice as an artist,” Nelson said. “It helped me build a strong foundation in my confidence, and it helped me develop strong leadership skills.”



Tam Nguyen, 17, a junior at Boston Latin Academy, discussed his artwork during a reception at MassArt for the youth program Artward Bound. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

For 17-year-old Tam Nguyen, a junior at Boston Latin Academy who is interested in



illustration, the program has introduced him to new media and new ideas and challenged him to try difficult things.

“It gives me the opportunity to think like an artist,” he said as he described his experiments in watercolor and quick sketches of strangers riding the subway. “So outside of Artward Bound, it’s up to me to apply the thinking that I’ve already learned into my own personal work.”

Across the gallery, Tiyanina Lindsey, 15, a sophomore at English High School in Jamaica Plain, pulled out a sketchbook full of complex, fantastical characters drawn with great skill and sensitivity. Lindsey said she has always been gifted at drawing, but she avoided art instruction because it was “boring.”

Her teachers at Artward Bound have helped push her work to the next level, she said.

“They really know how to engage you,” she said. “So even if you think it’s boring, you end up having fun anyway.”

Lindsey’s mother, Johanna Graves, 50, said she has always been impressed by her daughter’s creativity but had never before found an art program she was enthusiastic about.

“This program, she’s actually excited to come to,” Graves said. “She would even come early some days. There’s not one bad thing she’s said about this program, not one.”

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Jeremy C. Fox can be reached at [jeremy.fox@globe.com](mailto:jeremy.fox@globe.com). Follow him [@jeremyfox](https://twitter.com/jeremyfox).

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