

‘Beautifully Awkward’

SCHOOLS LIKE NOBLES SPECIALIZE IN ADOLESCENTS. What does this mean? Michael Denning, head of the upper school, summarized the priorities—sometimes in conflict with each other—for parents at an October 2014 open house.

He told families interested in Nobles that the school must succeed in three crucial endeavors: 1) to keep young people safe and healthy as they develop intellectually 2) to prepare them for the next phase of their life and education (i.e., college or university) and 3) to give them the skills and habits of mind that will allow them to contribute to their communities generously and with integrity over a lifetime.

These transformations—the acquisition of skills and development of talents—take years. During the 2013–2014 academic year, Nobles parent and acclaimed photographer Rania Matar P ’12 ’12 ’16 ’18 captured aspects of some of the courage, vulnerability, humor—and, yes, great beauty—inherent in this journey, when she photographed Nobles students in the context of athletic endeavors. The following images are a selection from Matar’s work-in-progress, “Beautifully Awkward.” She credits her photographer-friend David Hilliard with inspiring the working title when he looked at her images.

“My work focuses on transitions, identity and daily life, and has its basis in my being a woman and a mother. I have four kids and am always fascinated watching them navigate the teenage years and how

they deal with that important transition as their bodies are changing and their sense of self and identity developing,” Matar says.

“After photographing *A Girl and Her Room*, portraying teenage girls in their bedrooms, I became interested in photographing boys in the context of sports and found myself drawn to boys—but also to girls—in middle school and early high school. I found that age beautiful in its fragility and vulnerability and found the sometimes-awkwardness of the body language even more beautiful. Casual glances, hand gestures, subtle shifts in body language, vulnerability and admissions of uncertainties became the focus of those photographs.”

Matar was born and raised in Lebanon and moved to the United States in 1984. She originally trained as an architect at the American University of Beirut and at Cornell University. Matar documents her life through the lives of those around her, focusing on the personal and the mundane, in an attempt to portray the universal within the personal. Her work has been featured in numerous publications and exhibited widely in the United States and internationally, and is in the permanent collections of several museums worldwide. Matar’s latest monograph, *A Girl and Her Room*, published by Umbrage Editions, was released in May 2012. *The Foster Gallery at Nobles exhibited A Girl and Her Room in 2012.*



Nina Collins '18



Emma Friedel '19



Jayden DePina '17



Magdalena Blaise '18



Jack Roberts '17





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