

Dakota senior wins second Gold Medal for art in Scholastic competition

Royster set to travel to New York to accept award in June

MACOMB DAILY



Dakota High School senior Ashlee Royster won her second ever Gold Medal in the national Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for the painting pictured, "The Price of Freedom." PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM ROYSTER

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Art has earned Dakota senior Ashley Royster two national Gold Medal awards, but only one trip to New York, due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

"I am definitely going to Carnegie Hall. My parents are more excited than I am," Royster said.



Ashlee Royster, a Dakota High School senior, recently won her second Gold Medal in the national Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. (PHOTO COURTESY OF CYNTHIA HELVEY)

This is the second year in a row that Royster, 18, has won a Gold Medal for art in the national Scholastic Art and Writing Awards competition. Last year she had to accept her award via mail, but this year she is looking forward to a trip to New York City's Carnegie Hall to receive her second award on June 9.

Royster has been studying art with teacher Cynthia Helvey for two years at Dakota High School. She began her award-winning oil painting for this school year in September and completed it around the end of January 2022. She learned about her win and the trip to Carnegie Hall on about March 23. Royster's winning painting this year is entitled "The Price of Freedom," based on subject matter she selected herself, and inspired by the Ahmaud Arbery case.

"I care very much about political issues. I always have," Royster said.

Royster wanted her painting to reflect her beliefs about the price of freedom.

"I don't think there is a peaceful way to achieve it," Royster said.

Royster's previous Gold Medal win was for art on a similar subject matter. In the 2020-21 school year Royster earned a Golden Key in the Macomb County Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for artwork, before moving on to her national Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Gold Medal win. In the 2021-22 school year, Royster earned a Gold Key and American Visions Award nomination in the Macomb County Scholastic Art and Writing Awards before moving on to her win in the national competition.

Helvey said Royster displayed "The Price of Freedom" at Wayne State University in Detroit during the Tri-County High School Exhibition, which ran Feb. 17 to March 3. During the 2020-21 school year, Royster's art earned a first-place award at this show, earning her a \$4,000 scholarship to Wayne State University and a gift certificate.

Currently, some of Royster's artwork including the "The Price of Freedom" is on display at the Anton Art Center as part of the Macomb County Annual Secondary Student Art Show. Royster earned ribbons, a cash award and a gift certificate at the show for her work.

“She won two awards, Best in Grade is one, and the other is Best of Show,” Helvey said.

The Macomb County Secondary Student Art Show is an annual countywide visual arts competition open to students in grades 7-12. This year the Anton Art Center received 737 artwork submissions to be juried. Of those, 290 artworks by 161 students, presented by 32 teachers from 21 schools, were selected for the show. About 97 artworks were chosen for awards.

The show concluded at the Anton Art Center April 12.