Karen Israel takes ‘Best in Show’ at National Arts Program

Karen Israel of West Hartford was awarded ‘Best in Show’ at the Community Renewal Team’s 21st Annual National Arts Program exhibit Jan. 28 at Capital Community College. Judges for the work had to review more than 300 pieces in all media, from sketches on paper to sculpture and crafts. Israel’s work, titled “Early Bird,” wowed judges with its lifelike representation of a young girl sitting in a window and enjoying a snack in the morning sun.

Israel began getting serious about painting 10 years ago when she first dabbled in watercolor expressions before finding that the pastel medium was best suited to her natural talents. For her “Early Bird” painting, she recalled being inspired to create the painting after seeing a photograph.

“I was moved by the child’s intense gaze and by the beautiful light falling behind her from the windows onto the wooden table,” Israel said. “This painting then inspired me to create other paintings of children caught in unconscious moments.”

The contest was open to all Hartford and Middlesex County residents, age 6 and older, and the event showcased the common bond between art and the community.

“Art is a language that is wonderful to share with the community, and competitions like the CRT National Arts Program provide a wonderful venue for this expression,” said Israel.

The following West Hartford award winners were honored at the ceremony Jan. 28 at Capital Community College: Adult Intermediate: Shirley Karp, “Country Barn,” Honorable Mention; Chunjie She, “Cranes,” 3rd Prize; Adult Professional: Amanda Keating, “Bate’s House,” Honorable Mention.

Clockwise, from top left: Best in Show winner Karen Israel poses with her submission, “Early Bird.” University of Hartford student Amanda Keating received an Honorable Mention in the Adult Professional category for “Bate’s House.”

She won third prize in the Adult Intermediate category for “Cranes.” Shirley Karp's “Country Barn” garnered an Honorable Mention in the Adult Intermediate Category.

Photos by Jason M. Nastefl