**Year 12 student is nationally recognized for art piece and wins a golden key**

By Erin Pomfret

Alma Ihlberg, a Year 12 student at the British International School of Boston (BISB), has won the Golden Key award in the Scholastic Writing and Visual Arts contest for her piece “A Girl with a Pearl Tiara”. This win in the regional competition, allows her to compete on the national stage. There, her piece is competing against the works of other high school art students across the United States of America. She is scheduled to hear back about the National competition at some point in March of this year.

The Golden Key award is quite prestigious and is well-known throughout the art world. Only a few students can achieve it per state, and the standard of art is said to be comparable to art currently in museums. Any high schooler can submit their piece of artwork for judging in their state. There are many awards participants can achieve, including Gold and Silver Keys, honorable mentions, and other specific titles. The distinction and trophies are then given to the winners at an annual celebratory ceremony.

Ihlberg created the work on a piece of A4 paper using Prisma colored pencils. It includes a girl with her hair in a beautifully crafted bun and a light blue blouse. The girl is facing to the viewer’s left and has a thoughtful expression upon her face. On her head lies an intricate crown made of pearls. Ihlberg said that it was a homage to the Vermeer painting “Girl with a Pearl Earring”.

“I wanted to mirror it in a more modern way,” Ihlberg said. “It’s kind of an echo [to the painting]”.

It took Ihlberg a total of 15 hours of consistent hard work, creativity, and perseverance over the summer to make this beautiful piece. She started the process by sketching the initial ideas on her iPad and then eventually transitioned on to the final A4 paper. She overcame the challenge of using Prisma colored pencils for the first time, and has become quite skilled and comfortable with them.

Ihlberg’s family has exposed her to art since she was young and has continued to encourage her artistic passions. She explained how her family is “very artistically inclined” and how her mom has taken her to nearly every art museum in New York City.

Ihlberg remembers copying her sisters’ drawings when she was younger, always trying new designs. Through exposure to all the visual arts around her, she has developed a special appreciation for the arts and uses them as an emotion-releasing hobby.

Ihlberg is continuing to study art in the International Diploma Programme (IBDP) and is greatly enjoying the course. There, she is able to push her limits in drawing and can experiment with photography.

Ihlberg offered some advice to younger artists. “As frustrating as it might seem, the very best way to improve when it comes to art, is to start off by copying the processes and creations of other people in order to find your own style. Be very patient with yourself!”

