



Blakey Prize in Fine Art: Contest Guidelines

“What we like determines what we are, and is the sign of what we are; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character.”—John Ruskin

2025-2026

Submission Deadline: **Thursday, April 2, 2026.**

Who is eligible: Students in grades 9-12 enrolled full-time in an ACCS member school—and remain such through the end of the competition.

Guidelines

1. High school students (grades 9–12) from **ACCS schools** will compete with their peers from other ACCS member schools in a national visual arts competition. Each school may enter one student's artwork in the **drawing category** and one in the **painting category**. Note: Schools may enter the same student in both categories; however, different artwork is required for each category.
2. Each student must submit one **original** composition. Submitted works should best showcase each student's technical proficiency, demonstrate the integration of content and medium, and reflect principles of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Submitted works must be the student's work. Photography, computer-generated art, printed art, and painted- over prints are prohibited.

The artwork may not be a copy, in whole or in part, of any other artist's work, even if the copied work is completed in a medium different from that used for the original piece. If photographic references are used as the basis of any artwork, the artist must have either personally taken the photograph(s) or have the explicit permission of the photographer for such derivative use. Working from photos found online or in books or magazines must be avoided because of the potential for violating another's intellectual/creative rights. Students must not use photos found on Pinterest as the source for this work.

To protect ACCS, students **MUST** have written permission to use someone else's image. The best practice is to have the student take a photo of an item and use it as the source for their work.

Entries copied from images on Pinterest, etc. where the student does not have written permission will be disqualified.

All work submitted must be an entirely original conception of the student artist. Although the ACCS recognizes the value of copying masterworks as a vital part of the classical tradition in the visual arts, and we encourage students to do this as part of their training, submissions of masterwork copies are unacceptable for this contest.

Topics must be appropriate for presentation at the annual conference. ACCS reserves the right to reject any work that is considered inappropriate.

3. Drawing and painting entries will be judged separately by category.

Drawing is art drawn on a two-dimensional surface with pencil, ink, charcoal, pastel, crayon, etc. (The list of art media is illustrative, not exhaustive.)

Painting is art created by applying pigment to a two-dimensional surface with oil, acrylic, watercolor, gouache, tempera, ink, encaustic, fresco, spray paint, etc., applied on canvas, canvas board, paper, or any flat surface. (The list of art media is illustrative, not exhaustive.)

Minimal use of mixed mediums (across categories, such as gouache on inked drawing) is permitted. Excessive use of mixed mediums is subject to review and disqualification.

4. Submissions should be high-resolution files (e.g., a JPEG, PNG, or TIFF format) emailed as an attached file. Students and judges acknowledge that there will be color variations across various computers.
5. Contestants and submissions must meet all of these criteria:
 - a) At the time of submitting their materials to ACCS, contestants must be high-school students enrolled full-time in an ACCS member school—and remain such through the end of the competition.
 - b) All presentations must be entirely the student's work and appropriate for display at the annual conference.
 - c) All presentations must not exceed 36 inches in width or height.
6. Schools must submit entries to ACCS no later than **Thursday, April 2, 2026**. Along with the electronic image, each school must submit the artwork submission form (see following page), which requires the head of school's signature, certifies that the student is in high school, that the image represents the student's work, and that if chosen the school will arrange to have the original artwork shipped to the annual conference for display. Submissions must be received on time to allow time for adjudication, notification, and shipping arrangements.
7. ACCS member schools submitting a contestant must also provide a qualified judge who will judge all other entries except the one from their school.

ACCS will share the link to view all submissions on **Monday, April 6, 2026**. Judges will have one week to categorize each submission as **excellent, good, or average**. Judges will send their initial rankings to ACCS no later than **April 13, 2026**. ***The ACCS reserves the right to disqualify a student's entry if a judge does not submit their rankings by the deadline.***

8. ACCS will compile the list of initial rankings, compile the results, and use this information to develop a list of finalists for the prize. ACCS will then send the judges a smaller list of entries to be evaluated entirely according to the published standards.
9. The second round of judging will begin on **Tuesday, April 14th, 2026**. Judges will rank each participant and submit their rankings and written comments to the director of member services by **Tuesday, April 21st, 2026**. The director of member services will review the judge's rankings and written comments, check for consistent rankings and faithful application of published standards, and select the winner and runner-up. ***The ACCS reserves the right to disqualify***

a student's entry if a judge does not submit their rankings by the deadline.

10. ACCS will notify the winning contestants' designated school official no later than **April 24, 2026**.
11. The winning artwork will be displayed at the ACCS annual conference. Students are not required to attend the annual conference.
12. Winning students will be asked to provide a written statement that answers the question: "Describe how this piece of art reflects something you have learned as part of your classical Christian education."
13. Awards
 - a. The winner in each category will receive a \$300.00 cash prize from ACCS.
 - b. The runner-up in each category will receive a \$250.00 cash prize from ACCS.
14. Publicity and Agreement: Contest entry constitutes an agreement by the submitting students and schools to grant free licenses of all copyrights of the submitted works to the ACCS in perpetuity. The winning students' artwork image may be utilized at any time by ACCS. The student artist also maintains the right to use the image.
15. Media Release: By submitting artwork, you agree that the ACCS retains printing rights and a free license, in perpetuity, to utilize the design. You guarantee that your design does not contain copyrighted material, including images/copy found online, unless clearly marked as published under a Creative Commons (cc) license.



Image Submission Form

Please complete and submit this form with your entry.

Reminders: Your signature attests to the following:

1. The student is in high school.
2. The submitted work is the student's own work.
3. The image is appropriate for display at the annual conference.
4. If chosen, the school will send the original artwork to the ACCS annual conference.

Schools

who fail to provide artwork will be ineligible for next year's competition. (Works will be placed on an easel.)

Check to confirm that each item is completed:

School Name/State: _____

- ☐ 1. The name and email address of the judge from your school. Name:
Email address:
- ☐ 2. The student's name is: _____.
- ☐ 3. The name of the school is not visible in the image submitted for judging.
- ☐ 4. The submission is NOT a copy of a painting, photograph, etc., without express written permission of the owner. (e.g., you know the source of the image and that it's not from an image found on the internet.)
- ☐ 5. The title of this piece is: _____.
- ☐ 6. The dimensions of this piece are: ____ (height) ____ (width) (The original image may not be more than 36 inches in height or width.)
- ☐ 7. The medium and support used to create the piece is:

Administrator's signature



Judging Sheet 1: Categorize the Drawing Entries

These rankings will be used to sort the entries into three groups. (Judges will be asked to provide a detailed review and scores for the final entries after this initial evaluation.)

Directions: Place each entry into one of three categories: excellent, good, or average.

Do not include a ranking for the student from your school.

<u>Drawing Ranking</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>
Entry A			
Entry B			
Entry C			
Entry D			
Entry E			
Entry F			
Entry G			
Entry H			
Entry I			
Entry J			
Entry K			
Entry L			
Entry M			

Comments (if any):



Judging Sheet 1: Categorize the Painting Entries

These rankings will be used to sort the entries into three groups. (Judges will be asked to provide a detailed review and scores for the final entries after this initial evaluation.)

Directions: Place each entry into one of three categories: excellent, good, or average.

Do not include a ranking for the student from your school.

<u>Painting Ranking</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>
Entry N			
Entry O			
Entry P			
Entry Q			
Entry R			
Entry S			
Entry T			
Entry U			
Entry V			
Entry W			
Entry X			
Entry Y			
Entry Z			

Comments (if any):



Student's Letter:

Total Score:

Rating scale	Very Weak 0-4	Weak 5-8	Average 9-12	Good 13-16	Excellent 17-20	Outstanding 21-24
TRUTH: The artist has crafted this piece with truth. Truth refers to all or some of the following criteria:						
Accuracy: There is meaningful expression of the content.						
Technical Skill: The artist demonstrates mastery of the chosen medium.						
Execution: The work is complete; nothing is left to chance or unfinished. Everything has a purpose and nothing is overlooked.						
Title: The title automatically tells the story or instills the intended feeling of the work, telling the viewer in very few words exactly what the work is saying, its intended meaning, and/or its documentation.						
TRUTH: overall score for this section. (From 0 to 24)						
Rating scale	Very Weak 0-8	Weak 9-16	Average 17-24	Good 25-32	Excellent 33-40	Outstanding 41-48
BEAUTY: The artist has crafted this piece with beauty. Beauty refers to all (or some) of the following criteria:						



Lighting/Value: Values (light, medium, or dark) are dynamic. Lights and darks are linked together as much as possible.

Color: There is one dominant color, or color harmony with others subordinate, avoiding having too many competing colors.

Shape/Motif: There is one dominant shape motif (not too many competing shapes), with transitional forms to harmonize contrasting shapes.

Spacing: There is variety in spacing (rather than masses that are too much the same).

Line: There is variation in line/edges.

Balance: The piece is balanced, creating a satisfying and harmonious whole, nothing is out of proportion or unduly emphasized at the expense of the rest.

Depth/Perspective: The artist created an illusion of special depth or distance.



Design: There is one area of focus, or one central idea, that this work is about. (No confusion about what is most important.) Other design elements are used with care and purpose.

BEAUTY: overall score for this section. (From 0 to 48)						
Rating scale	Very Weak 0-4	Weak 5-8	Average 9-12	Good 13-16	Excellent 17-20	Outstanding 21-24
GOODNESS: The artist has crafted this piece with goodness. Goodness refers to all (or some) of the following criteria:						
“The overall ensemble works, grabs my eye and holds my attention,” “I was virtually gripped.” I would enjoy living with this image every day. “I wish I had created this piece.” This piece stirs emotion or arouses the imagination. It creates a sense of connection or familiarity by creating a mood, a place and time . . . it sends a message that demands notice. This piece says, “Look at me, appreciate me, fall in love with me, admire me and take me home.”						
GOODNESS: overall score for this section. (From 0 to 24)						



Judging Sheet 2: Evaluating the Finalists

Directions: Score each of the final pieces. DRAWING

Do not include a ranking for the student from your school.

Ranking	<u>Student's Letter</u>	<u>Score</u>
Rank #1		
Rank #2		
Rank #3		
Rank #4		
Rank #5		
Rank #6		
Rank #7		

Written comments:

Rank 1:

Rank 2:

Rank 3:

Rank 4:

Rank 5:

Rank 6:

Rank 7:

Explanation for your final top three rankings:



Judging Sheet 2: Evaluating the Finalists

Directions: Score each of the final pieces. PAINTING

Do not include a ranking for the student from your school.

Ranking	<u>Student's Letter</u>	<u>Score</u>
Rank #1		
Rank #2		
Rank #3		
Rank #4		
Rank #5		
Rank #6		
Rank #7		

Written comments:

Rank 1:

Rank 2:

Rank 3:

Rank 4:

Rank 5:

Rank 6:

Rank 7:

Explanation for your final top three rankings:



Photographing Your Work ([Virginia Museum of Fine Art](#))

For guidance photographing your work with a digital camera, check [Step-by-Step How to Photograph Your Work](#). If you do not have access to a digital camera, you may use a cell phone, but keep the following things in mind:

1. Use natural lighting
 - a. Low-grade (or soft) lighting works well. The best time to photograph your work is in the early morning or at dusk.
 - b. Keep the sun at your back and be sure the sunlight hits the artwork evenly and that there are no shadows from trees or any other object.
2. Avoid zoom
 - a. Instead of using the zoom function on the camera, walk closer to the work of art.
3. Use a neutral background
 - a. Photograph your work against a neutral background such as a gray sidewalk.
 - b. No sidewalk? Use a piece of gray poster board or paint poster board gray.
 - c. Do not crop your work, even if the background is less than ideal. It is better for the jurors to see the whole piece represented well, rather than just a portion of the work.
4. Beware of the blur
 - a. Keep your hand steady while taking a photo with a camera phone or your photo will be blurred.
 - b. Consider leaning your camera phone (or the hand holding it) against a solid object (such as a tree, wall, or ledge).
5. Keep it simple
 - a. Don't use Instagram or other trendy photo applications.
 - b. Depict your work of art truthfully—applying effects to your documentary photographs will not achieve this goal.