



Drawing Self-Emancipation: Youth Art Competition and Exhibition

Description, Eligibility, Submission

Competition Cycle: May 4th - August 29th 2026

Organiser: The HeritEdge Connection Inc.

Project Lead: Anisah Wood, Programme Associate

Overview

Drawing Self-Emancipation, a youth art competition and exhibition, invites individuals aged 16 to 25 in Barbados to produce 2-dimensional artworks that reinterpret advertisements for 'runaway slaves' through a lens of agency, resistance, and possibility.

Originally produced to aid in the capture of enslaved people who escaped slavery, these advertisements reduced the lives of people from Africa or of African descent to property and framed their actions as criminal. At the same time, they are testimony to the courage of enslaved people who asserted their human rights, dignity, and autonomy through acts of resistance and self liberation.

This competition asks participants to disrupt the narrative within these notices by reimagining the individuals described within not as fugitives, but as self-emancipating people who courageously pursued freedom. Moving beyond the moment of escape, artists are invited to visualize the self-determined futures of these individuals.

This competition is an opportunity for youth to express their perspectives on Barbados' history and reparatory justice through artistic expression and to further their art career.

Competition Timeline

4 May 2026 - Competition Launch

1 June 2026 - Entries Open

30 June 2026 - Entries Close

1 - 15 July 2026 - Judging

16 - 31 July 2026 - Announcement of shortlisted entries

13 - 29 August 2026 - Drawing Self-Emancipation Art Exhibition



Eligibility and Requirements

Eligibility

- Students or recent graduates ages 16 to 25, who are residents of Barbados.

Requirements for Entry

- Submitted artworks must be original static 2-dimensional pieces no larger than A1 (59 x 84 cm).
- Artworks can be made in any artistic style, using traditional and/or digital media.
- Artworks may be created as an individual or as a group collaboration between two or more persons, who meet the eligibility criteria.
- Artworks must draw from one or more “runaway ads” found in colonial newspapers printed in Barbados.
- For individual entries, there is a limit of one (1) work per participant. Participants can also be part of one (1) group work.
- Artwork must be submitted with a completed registration form provided by HeritEdge.
- This competition is meant to foster creativity and imagination. Art created using AI image generators of any kind will not be accepted. Whether entirely made by AI, or partly made by AI image generators – this work is not eligible to enter.

Prizes

Prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd ,and 3rd place winners. Additionally, the winners and those shortlisted will also be invited to participate in the Drawing Self-Emancipation exhibition. The exhibition will provide exposure and recognition and the invaluable experience of showcasing within a gallery setting.

Submission

Entries are to be submitted to The HeritEdge Connection Inc. at a location to be announced soon. The deadline for submission is June 30th 2026 at 4 PM. An entry form, which will be made available on our website HeritEdge.org or in person at the location for submission, must accompany all entries. These forms may be submitted as physical documents or online.

Where to find ‘runaway ads’

A collection of advertisements from The Barbados Mercury and The Barbadian newspapers can be found on our website, HeritEdge.org. In addition participants may visit the Digital Library of the Caribbean website, <https://dloc.com/fr>, for further references.

For more information, visit our competition page -

<https://heritEdge.org/events/drawing-self-emancipation-2026-competition/>



About The HeritEdge Connection Inc.

The HeritEdge Connection Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to the preservation and accessibility of the tangible and intangible heritage of the Caribbean in partnership with cultural heritage organizations in the region by connecting people, institutions, and resources through cultural heritage projects to foster cultural awareness for generations to come.

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