

Koestler Associates Newsletter December 2022

Season's Greetings!

Hello from all of us at Koestler Arts at the end of our 60th anniversary year. Thanks to all of you for helping us to celebrate it by sending us your wonderful creative work and staying in touch! Wishing you all the best for the new year.

In this Associates newsletter we're rounding up the 2022 Awards and national exhibition, and inviting you to take part in a creative activity! Enclosed are the cards you'll need to take part, and our latest Art Aid sheet.

In January we'll be sending you entry forms and guidance notes for the 2023 Awards, and in February we'll be sending additional feedback for 2022 entries, so keep an eye out for those!

Reminder

Please note that to remain an Associate you must enter the 2023 Koestler Awards. If for any reason you are unable to enter, or don't wish to this time, but would like to remain an Associate, please write to us and let us know. Please also let us know changes to your address or contact details, so we can ensure future newsletters, certificates, feedback, awards and sales money, and returned artwork reach you!

For this or any other queries, you can always:

- **write to us for free at:** FREEPOST Koestler Arts
- **email:** info@koestlerarts.org.uk
- **call:** 020 8740 0333

Tynsol Town (detail), HM Prison Isle of Wight (Albany), Commended Award for Sculpture



2022 Koestler Awards

Platinum Award Winners

Thanks for sharing your entries with us this year. We published the 2022 Awards results on our website in August and sent certificates out in the Autumn so hopefully you have received these. Below is a selection of Platinum Award winning entries to inspire your future work!



Marmite, Wellesley Hospital,
Jeremy Hutchinson QC Platinum
Award for Themed Category: Taste

Crosse & Blackwell Scotch Broth,
HM Prison & Young Offender
Institution Parc, Platinum Award for
Ceramics



Nana's

I sat by the fire
but that wasn't the warmest place
in your home.
That place always moved.
That place
was you.

Nana's, from the collection *Home, Prison and Love*,
HM Prison Warren Hill, Platinum Award for Poetry
Collection



VW Camper and Caravan, HM Prison
Edinburgh, Arts Society Greater London
Area Platinum Award for Matchstick



The Shipwreck, HM Prison Littlehey, Platinum
Award for Watercolour and Gouache



The Ghost of Gaia, HM Prison
Frankland, Shearman Bowen
Platinum Award for Drawing



Queen 1952, HM Prison Lewes,
Platinum Award for Portrait

*The Wasteful Taste of
Consumerism*, HM Prison
Bronzefield, Clare Askew
Platinum Award for Themed
Category: Taste



Crucifixion

Typically I missed the moment –
 I let my eyes be pulled away for just two seconds
 and it flew up as if from nowhere
 and caught one wing on the razor wire
 above the wall.
 If I had been attentive, then...

Another seagull stood stiff-necked afar off
 and looking on kept wordless vigil
 like the watching women.

It hung for days living.
 Each exercise we watched it too –
 and as the sun trudged across the blue square of sky
 above the yard
 it sprayed sapphires of light
 on the scourges of the wire.

Crucifixion, HMP Isle of Wight, HM Prison Isle of Wight (Parkhurst), Lorraine Holden Memorial Platinum Award for Poem



Space Chicken, Devon and Cornwall Police, Space Station Sixty-Five Platinum Award for Pastel



Shades Within, HM Prison Isle of Wight (Parkhurst), Department of Law and Criminology, Royal Holloway University of London Platinum Award for Woodcraft

Alienation, Arbury Court, Platinum Award for Painting



Deus Ex Machina, HM Prison Whatton, Artists' Collecting Society Platinum Award for Drawing

The Road to Wigan Pier (Tribute to George Orwell), HM Prison Channings Wood, Ariane Bankes Platinum Award for Drawing



Where There's Life... There's Hope, HM Prison Stafford, Platinum Award for Mural and Wall Hanging

Freedom

Freedom was our 2022 National Exhibition, held at London's Southbank Centre this autumn. It featured over 1800 pieces of visual artwork, writing and music from the 2022 Koestler Awards - ten times more work than we've ever exhibited before! It was a fantastic way to celebrate Koestler's 60th Anniversary and has been hugely well attended and popular with visitors.

Chinese contemporary artist, documentarian and activist Ai Weiwei curated *Freedom*, and his vision was to display as much as possible, to showcase the full range of creative work being made in secure settings.

"I was astonished when I looked at these 6000+ artworks that I was curating. Their contemplation, expression and techniques expressed in their art surprised me a lot. A lot of the artworks are no different from so-called professional artists' works. Some are even better."

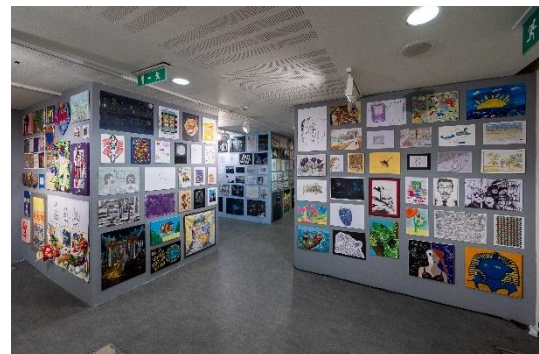


- Ai Weiwei, Curator

Temporary walls were built throughout much of the exhibition space to create extra capacity to display drawings and paintings, and the small cell-like enclosures this created meant visitors viewed the works in confined spaces evocative of the environments in which many of them were made.

"For Ai Weiwei, it was essential for the artwork to be displayed in a way that was fitting to the environment in which it was made, The works on paper were left unframed and the sculptures were not enclosed within Perspex cases. Showcasing the work in this way removes the physical barrier that sits between us as viewers and the artwork, inviting a sense of vulnerability. Perhaps this enables us to engage with the collection in a more immersive and empathetic way."

- Lee Cutter, Exhibition Producer



Large shelving units displayed almost 200 sculptures and models, and poetry was printed on large vinyls across various walls. Elsewhere visitors could watch film and animation pieces on screens, and listen to spoken word and music on headphones.

"Very striking and enriching! It is so special to see so much talent and vision in one exhibition!"

"Beautiful and touching, especially because it shows the fullness of experience."

- Exhibition visitors



Exhibition Hosts

Since 2013 we have trained and employed people who have been in prison to work at our annual national exhibition as Exhibition Hosts. Hosts take members of the public on tours of the exhibition, run our pop-up shop, and invigilate the exhibition space. Hosts bring the exhibition to life for our visitors and the role can have a huge impact on those we employ.



We were delighted to run this project again for *Freedom*. Our seven Hosts did a fantastic job welcoming thousands of visitors and sharing insights into the exhibited artwork and the experience of being creative in secure settings. We asked them to reflect on their experience:

“The public enjoyed seeing so many exhibits and the effort and talent that was included. I’d like to say to the artists: keep up the hard work, keep pushing yourself and prove everyone wrong! You are bigger than your struggle and can be the best if you stay persistent.”

“I think it makes some of the public more comfortable to speak to somebody [who’s been] in prison and ask them what’s it like. If they’ve got specific questions that they can’t ask or they can’t look at statistics for, they can ask us directly and I think that’s good.

I’ve spoke to some people myself and they’ve been like ‘this is too much, I’ll have to come back, but it’s beautiful, but it’s brilliant, but-’. They always say that word ‘but’. ‘It is good, it is beautiful’, which makes it seem like as much as there’s so many artworks and it’s overwhelming, you can always come back and find something new.



This job has took me out my shell, it’s allowed me to speak to a lot of people, build up some links, and there might be more doors that open.”

“[From speaking to us, the public] get a little bit of an insight into where the artwork has come from, what the artist has to say about it, but they also get our personal experience and our thoughts on that particular piece of artwork. There’s a few pieces - like *Goodbye to 7 Years on E-Wing* - people don’t understand that that is literally how all the cells are set up. Without having someone to say “This is exactly how it is, and you’ll have your phone there, and the door there, and the toilet’s just around the corner”, people wouldn’t understand the context because they’ve never been into a prison cell before. Without having that insight from us they wouldn’t know what the piece really means to somebody and they wouldn’t really take in the tiny little details. They don’t know about the day to day system of the prison and how it works and how challenging it can be to put the artwork together, so we give them that information and it makes the art even more valuable to them.



Goodbye to 7 Years on E-Wing, HM Prison Isle of Wight (Albany), Painting

[This job] has given me the tools to be able to be passionate and to share my passion with other people so that’s really something that I’ll value. And it’s been a stepping stone to give me the confidence to carry on doing more things.

There are so many fantastic pieces of art and so many that I feel proud to speak to people about.”

Voices From Prison

As part of the London Literature Festival we host an annual evening of poetry and spoken word performances at the Southbank Centre. This year the event was hosted by award-winning presenter, facilitator and creative producer, and Koestler Awards judge, Fusion.

Writing from the 2022 Koestler Awards was performed by artists and writers engaged with Koestler Arts, including Koestler Mentees and judges, prison tutors, and featured poets' family members.

Chris, a Koestler Mentee and volunteer writes about his experience performing at *Voices From Prison*:

"I first heard about Koestler whilst in prison. I wrote to them asking if I could volunteer there. They wrote back within a few weeks saying yes and that they would arrange it with the prison. I worked there with the Koestler team for seven months. They are such kind, empathetic people. I enjoyed it so much and gained so much confidence, I've been a volunteer since.

After release from prison, Koestler gave me a mentor called Nicola, who has been supporting me in the community to achieve my goals of becoming a published author, creating a documentary, and doing public speaking. Koestler gave me my first opportunity to do public speaking by offering me an opportunity to speak at *Voices From Prison*. Although I wanted to become a public speaker, public speaking was a massive fear of mine, so I had to enrol in public speaking classes with Toastmasters to get the skill to speak in front of 150 people and build my speaking confidence. Even after several months of classes I was still nervous, but I wanted to face my fears.

The night of the event I was so apprehensive. I had chosen to go last as my speech was more of a closing speech and this only intensified my nerves. My speech was partly about my personal experiences, and also contained three different poems from the Koestler Awards that I had selected that I felt I could personally relate to. Sitting there waiting to go made it more difficult as your nerves build up in anticipation for yourself to speak. However, when I did my speech, it went really well. After the first few lines I got into it and the response has been fantastic. I've had nothing but positive feedback and encouragement and now cannot wait to do my next speaking event."



Initial Impressions of a Variety of Mugshots in Four Words

Calm	pensive	and	thoughtful
Very	embarrassed	and	ashamed
Looks	like	mainly	indifference
Don't	mess	with	me
Covid	mask	under	chin
I	shouldn't	be	here
Deer	in	the	headlights
Is	that	a	smirk?
Rock	star	in	training
Feeling	sorry	for	himself
Quite	impressive	facial	hair
Laughing	his	head	off
Is	that	a	tear?

Initial Impressions of a Variety of Mugshots in Four Words, HM Prison Littlehey, Eric McGraw Memorial Silver Award for Poem

Performed at *Voices From Prison*

Timeline

January-April 2023: Unsold visual art entries from the 2022 Awards returned to establishments

February 2023: Sales money and additional feedback from the 2022 Awards sent to entrants

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January 2023: 2023 Koestler Awards entry forms and guidance notes sent to establishments and Associates

6th April 2023: 2023 Awards deadline

Postcards From Prison

In the spring, we will be holding our third Postcards From Prison event, and as a Koestler Associate, we would love your help!

At the event, guests will receive a postcard featuring original artwork by an artist either in or outside of prison. Some famous artists including Jeremy Deller, Grayson Perry and Sarah Lucas will be decorating postcards for us, and we would love our Associates to do as well.

Enclosed with this newsletter is two blank postcards for you to decorate - you're welcome to return both to us or keep one for yourself. You can use any medium, from mixed media to drawing and painting.

Please don't sign the front of the postcard, as we want them all to be anonymous and we won't be able to use any postcards which have names on them. On the back, please fill out the artwork title and your unique Koestler Number.

If you would like to take part, please return your postcards to us in the Freepost envelope enclosed by Monday 27 February 2023.

We'd be really grateful for your help, and your postcard donation will help us on our way to raising the £800,000 we need to keep the Koestler Awards and exhibitions going each year.

If you have any questions about the event do give us a ring on 020 8740 0333 and ask for Mali Clements. We are really looking forward to seeing your postcard artworks!

Art Aid

We know how important creativity is to our entrants and wanted to provide some inspiration in a difficult time, so began creating and sharing our Art Aid activity sheets in Spring 2020. Each month, we commission a former or current Koestler Mentee to set a creative task that can be done in cell, and ask them to share their own experiences of creativity and the criminal justice system, in the hopes it will inspire you.

The latest Art Aid sheet is enclosed with this newsletter. It features a task set by Koestler Award winner and Mentee, Chris, inspired by the 2023 Koestler Awards Themed Category, 'A Day in the Life'.

If you enjoy the task, you can now sign up to be sent new Art Aid sheets directly at the start of every month. Just complete the below slip and return it to us in the Freepost envelope provided.

Polestar, HM Prison Dovegate, Highly Commended Award for Ceramics



Name:

Prison Number:

Address:

Tick here to be sent monthly Art Aid sheets