

## Koestler Associates Newsletter - Spring 2023

### Hello from the Koestler Team!

Hello from all of us at the Koestler Arts Centre, where we've recently been joined by thousands of 2023 Awards entries! We can't wait to see what you've created this year and hope you've enjoyed putting your submissions together. In this newsletter we're updating you on our recent and upcoming activities and inviting you to take part in a creative task. Enclosed are the materials for that task and a publication celebrating 60 years of our charity.

### 2023 Koestler Awards

The 2023 Awards deadline has now passed - thank you to those of you who entered creative work this year! We are now busy opening thousands of parcels and preparing your submissions for judging.

We cannot confirm receipt of entries just yet, but will write to entrants in the summer to let them know their work arrived safely, once it has all been logged on our system. The 2023 Awards results will be announced on our website and sent to establishment staff at the end of August. Good luck to all of you!



2023 Awards entries arriving at the Koestler Arts Centre

### 2022 Artwork Returns



Visual artwork entered into the 2022 Awards that has not been sold or donated has now been sent back to establishments or is being sent to entrants in the community in the coming weeks.

If you have queries about returns please ask your education department or write to us and we can look into it for you.

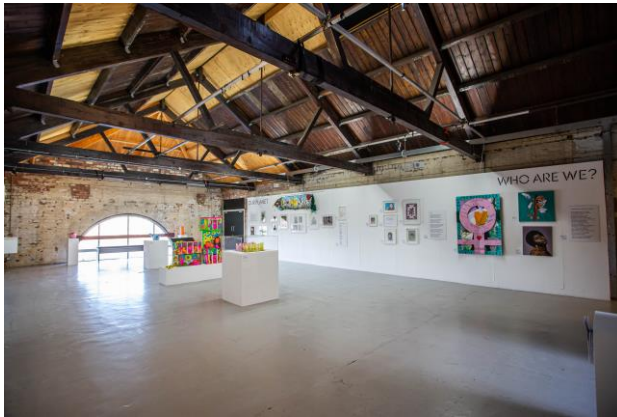
2022 Awards entries on their way back to entrants

## Regional Exhibitions

Koestler exhibitions in Scotland and Berkshire have recently closed after a very busy couple of months! Both were very well attended and popular, attracting thousands of visitors.

### *Our World, Tramway, Glasgow, 24 January - 26 February 2022*

*Our World* featured around 60 pieces entered into the 2022 Koestler Awards from Scotland, selected for display by a group of learners in HMP Shotts.



“Wonderful exhibition. Best I have seen in a long time. Flows with feeling and talent.”

“What an absolute pleasure to view these works, each so inspiring and diverse.”

“All of the artworks inspired me.”

“I am so glad I caught this! It is superb. I appreciate the artistry, expression and creativity of the artists.”

- Visitor comments

### *On My Plate, South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, 21 January - 5 March 2022*

*On My Plate* showcased works about food entered into the 2022 Koestler Awards by women, alongside works made in women’s prisons as part of the University of Surrey’s research project ‘Doing Porridge: Understanding women’s experiences of food in prison’.

“So colourful, creative, different. Cheered me up a lot seeing all your work.”

“An inspiration to women around the world. Proving that art and creativity has no limits, even when life is not so ideal!”

“Wonderful exhibition.”

“All the artists put in so much effort, showing talent and humour. The entire exhibition is fantastic.”

- Visitor comments



### *John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, Autumn 2023*

We’re excited to announce that in autumn 2023 we will have a regional exhibition at John Hansard Gallery in Southampton, one of the UK’s leading contemporary art galleries.

The exhibition will showcase a selection of visual art, writing and music entered into the 2023 Koestler Awards from the South West of England and Hampshire. Our curators will consider all 2023 entries from this region for inclusion. We’ll be sharing more information about our plans for the exhibition with you later in the year!

## Postcards from Prison

At the end of last year we asked Associates to decorate postcards for us for our third Postcards from Prison fundraising event, which is coming up this May at The Art Workers' Guild in London. We were delighted that so many of you took part in this activity and so impressed with your creativity and skill.

We received more than 150 postcards from Associates, which will be displayed and sold alongside postcards decorated by renowned artists including Vanessa Jackson RA, Alison Lapper, Jeremy Deller, Jake Chapman and Marc Quinn. The funds raised will help Koestler Arts to continue our work. Thank you so much for your contributions to this exciting event!

Below is a selection of your wonderful postcards...



...and some by professional artists who have also generously created postcards for us:



## Affordable Art Fair

Another exciting event this spring is the 2023 Affordable Art Fair in Hampstead, London. We're delighted that Koestler Arts has been selected as the official charity partner for the event. We were the first charity partner of the fair around 20 years ago, and we are so pleased to have been selected again.

We'll have a stall at the fair selling artworks made by people in secure settings and on probation, including donated works from the Koestler Awards and works made by people on our arts mentoring scheme, and visitors will be invited to make donations to us. Money raised will help fund our mentoring scheme, and it will be an opportunity to introduce lots of new people to Koestler Arts and to the creative work being made in the criminal justice system.

## Bookmark Activity

This year we will publish the fourth volume of our anthology of poems entered into the Koestler Awards: *Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons, Vol. 4*. The book will include a selection of poems from the 2022 and 2023 Awards. Those whose poems are selected will be notified later in the year and will receive a copy of the book.

We are inviting Koestler Associates to get involved by decorating bookmarks with original artwork or writing. We'll give these to supporters who help fund the *Koestler Voices* anthology, along with their copy of the new book when it is published this autumn.

We've made blank bookmarks with our branding on the back for this activity - two are enclosed with this newsletter. We're hoping you will decorate these, keep one for yourself or gift it to someone else, and return one to us in the Freepost envelope provided.

You can decorate your bookmark however you wish - you might paint or draw something, or write a short poem or quote. If you're looking for inspiration, why not try to write or design something relating to books or poetry. If you write a quote by someone else don't forget to note their name, and if you use collage or needlecraft make sure to use flat materials that won't damage a book if placed inside - we want them to be something people treasure and use often!

Please keep your bookmarks anonymous as we won't be able to share any with names on, and please return them to us by the end of May.

Your bookmarks won't be entered into the 2023 Koestler Awards - this is a separate activity we hope you'll enjoy putting your mind to now our Awards deadline has passed. We have been so impressed with your responses to similar activities including decorating postcards and greetings cards for us in the past year, and hope you'll enjoy taking part again this time.

We'll share a selection of our favourite bookmarks in an upcoming Associates newsletter. We can't wait to see what you create, and thanks in advance to those of you who take part! Our supporters will be delighted to receive your bookmarks and your efforts will help us fund this volume of our anthology.



Reading - After Matisse,  
HM Prison & Young  
Offender Institution  
Parc, Painting, 2017



Blank bookmarks  
enclosed with this  
newsletter



Never Judge a Book by its Movie, HM Prison Ashfield, Craft, 2015

## Gary Mansfield

We like to bring you stories of people with experience of the criminal justice system who remain involved with Koestler Arts beyond entering our Awards. This time we're introducing you to artist Gary Mansfield, who has been a Koestler Trustee since 2019.

As with all charities, Koestler Arts has a board of Trustees as well as its staff team. Our Trustees are responsible for ensuring the charity delivers its mission within its resources by setting strategy, agreeing business plans and guiding the staff team. Our Trustees are 11 professionals from the worlds of the arts and criminal justice, including the Former Director of Visual Arts at the British Council, a prison Governor, artists, curators, and lawyers.

Gary was a long-term prisoner when he discovered art. From his cell, he corresponded with some of the biggest names in British contemporary art, who guided him towards a Fine Art degree. Gary is now an artist, curator and host of the 'Ministry of Arts' podcast, and has collaborated with many of the artists that once supported him.

We asked Gary to tell you about his experiences with Koestler over the years:

I discovered art in prison during my mid-20s, having never had an interest in the subject; I'd certainly never been in a gallery, that seemed to be something other people did.

To be honest, I joined the art-class with the intention of using it to jump the long queue onto the computer course. That intention was quickly scuppered by the art tutor who was so passionate about teaching people the value of art that it was almost hypnotising.

His patience in teaching a very frustrated me various methods in basic drawing approaches was commendable, but once he found the one that suited me I was off!

By the time Spring came around, I was certain art/creativity would be in my life forever, possibly even as a career; however, my vision of an artist wasn't a bloke from a council estate in Dagenham.

I was told about an annual exhibition for people within the criminal justice system created by a charity called Koestler Arts. I entered my favourite painting but was so nervous about people seeing my work if it was chosen to be shown.

My work was chosen. I felt proud, scared and vulnerable all at the same time. My family visited the show and photographed strangers in front of my painting, pointing at it, smiling at it, just like I imagined someone would at a 'real' artist's work. That was a turning point for me. It somehow validated me from the other side of the wall, it gave me the confidence to enrol in the advanced art course.

I entered each Koestler exhibition for the remainder of my sentence, I completed the advanced course, completed a BA in Fine Art upon release, became an artist and have visited every Koestler show since.



*30 Years Apart (Sorry Mum),*  
Gary Mansfield



*TIME (Padlock),* Gary Mansfield

In his TIME drawing series, Gary uses thousands of tally marks - used by prisoners to mark passing days - to create images of locks and barbed wire.

Those levels of pride, related to Koestler Arts, hit new heights a short time ago when I was invited onto its board of Trustees, helping make decisions that give so many aspiring creatives that same buzz of anticipation, hope and validation.

Most importantly, being on Koestler's board of Trustees as an artist with a lived experience of the criminal justice system, demonstrates to others that the arts are for everyone and an artist can be anyone... Even a bloke from a council estate in Dagenham.

## Koestler Arts at 60

2022 marked Koestler Arts' 60<sup>th</sup> year and we produced a book to celebrate this milestone. We have enclosed a copy for you with this newsletter - hopefully you'll be interested to read more about our history and our work.

## 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 reflective task set by a Koestler Award winner in a secure children's home. We hope you will enjoy giving it a try.

To access the new Art Aid sheets each month please speak to a member of your education department. They can be downloaded from the Koestler Arts website from the first Monday of the month. You can also write to us at FREEPOST Koestler Arts to be sent the latest sheets directly.

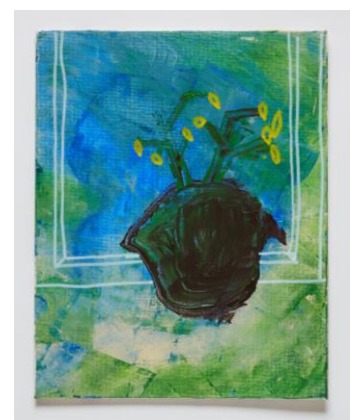
## Reminder

Please note that if you haven't entered the 2023 Koestler Awards but would like to remain an Associate, you must write to us to let us know, otherwise your name will be removed from this mailing list.

Please also let us know any changes to your address or contact details, so we can ensure future newsletters, certificates, feedback, prize 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](mailto:info@koestlerarts.org.uk)
- **call:** 020 8740 0333



*Plant of Hope & Resilience,*  
Arbury Court, Commended Award  
for Painting, 2022