

## 2022 Awards

### Timeline

Over the past couple of months, thousands of entries have been unwrapped, logged in, and organised in preparation for judging. Below are the key dates for the rest of this year's Awards cycle:

**31 August 2022: Awards results announced on Koestler Arts website**

**31 October 2022: Certificates and prize money sent to entrants**

**By end of April 2023: Unsold visual artwork returned to entrants**

In an effort to ensure as many entrants as possible receive detailed feedback on their entries, we'll be sending some feedback in October with certificates and prize money, with more to follow in the new year.

### Judging

Judging of the 2022 Awards is underway! For each of our 52 artform categories, we invite specialist judges to spend a day at the Koestler Arts Centre looking at, reading, or listening to entries, assigning awards, and writing feedback to entrants. Below are images of judging so far, judges' responses to this year's entries and advice for future creative work.



Jeanine Richards, Charlotte Cullinan and Charles Darwent, Painting judges

**"We were impressed by originality, imagination and expression."**

- Jeanine Richards, Painting judge

**"All the works awarded prizes were very strong and compelling - unanimously chosen for the emotional expression and obvious personal approach to subject matter."**

- Charlotte Cullinan, Painting judge

**"Often it's the films that have the most original creativity at the heart of them [that stand out]. That's often more exciting than technical skill."**

- Caragh Davison, Film judge



Caragh Davison, Film judge

“I chose Award-winning pieces through a mix of personal preference and those which were technically accomplished.”

- Wilfrid Wood, Portrait judge



Wilfrid Wood, Portrait judge



Wanda Canton and Errol McGlashan, Spoken Word judges

“The energy and effort and creativity shone through all the pieces...It is not only about skill or talent, there are other factors involved that are just as important, i.e. sincerity, vulnerability, sense of humour.”

“My advice is to do your ting innit! It’s your ting, I can’t tell you how to do it. But I can tell you when to start... right now!”

- Errol McGlashan, Spoken Word judge

“I love the use of colour, shape and pattern, and Award-winning pieces use this in a really creative way. The standard of work is incredible.”

“The level of skill and attention to detail was outstanding! Many of the pieces look professionally made and it made it hard to judge!”

- Onome Otite, Textile Art judge



Onome Otite, Textile Art judge



Kim Coleman and Robert Taylor, Photography judges

“We were looking for creativity, particularly in the ways photographers tried to find fresh ways to explore the familiar. We were drawn to brave explorations of feelings and, of course, images that were graphically strong.”

- Robert Taylor, Photography judge

## Freedom, Southbank Centre, London: 27 October - 18 December 2022

We are delighted that our annual national exhibition of art, music and writing from the Koestler Awards will again be held at London's Southbank Centre this autumn.

The exhibition, titled *Freedom*, is being curated by celebrated contemporary artist, documentarian, and activist, Ai Weiwei. To mark Koestler Arts' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Ai Weiwei intends for this landmark exhibition to be our 'most ambitious yet'!

Ai Weiwei's vision for the exhibition has been shaped by visits to prisons around the world, his own experience of detention in China, and a recent visit to HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs to meet with Koestler entrants and hear about their experiences of incarceration, as well as visits to the Koestler Arts Centre to see, read and listen to the more than 6500 entries to the 2022 Koestler Awards.



Ai Weiwei selecting works to be included in *Freedom*, July 2022

Ai Weiwei was taken aback by the scale of the Koestler Awards when visiting our Arts Centre and wants *Freedom* to reflect the huge quantity and variety of creative works we receive so the visiting public can experience this too. The exhibition will include a diverse range of works from across our artform categories, and many more works than we have ever showcased before.

The exhibition space will also be physically transformed with specially built walls to reflect the environments in which most of the exhibited works were made.

*Freedom* promises to be a really exciting and unique Koestler exhibition and we are looking forward to the challenge of working on a much bigger scale than usual. It will be fantastic to share even more of your creative work with the public!

**“This exhibition focuses on the role that the act of thinking and creating plays in life under constraints. Notable works of art and literature in history were created when the artist was restricted, oppressed, and challenged, rather than being completely free. The language and feelings that emerged from these conditions are much more profound, convincing, and powerful.**



Ai Weiwei and Koestler National Exhibition Producer Lee at the Koestler Arts Centre, July 2022

**I visited different prisons in the UK and saw the living conditions of different kinds of prisoners. I hope that this exhibition can inspire people to reflect upon the loss of freedom and those that continue to create art to fight for space in life and freedom of expression despite adversity.”**

- Ai Weiwei

## 2023 Awards

### Themed Category

In our Spring newsletter we invited Koestler Associates to make suggestions for the 2023 themed category, and we were delighted to receive almost 200 responses! The Koestler Team went through your brilliant ideas, shortlisted the most popular, and voted for our favourites.

We are very excited to announce that the themed category for the 2023 Koestler Awards is...

### A DAY IN THE LIFE

Thanks so much to all of you who made suggestions, and especially to the person who came up with 'A day in the life'.

Work made in any artform - visual, written or performed - can be entered into the themed category. We are always amazed to see the huge range of work the category inspires, and the variety of ways our themes are interpreted by different entrants. We are interested in personal and creative interpretations of the theme and what it means to you.

You might want to depict a day in your life or someone else's - a real or imagined person, animal or object. It might be a typical day, or a particular day from the past or future - ordinary or extraordinary. You could think about how to represent movement and change - in light, location, emotion - over the course of a day in a single image, or how to distinguish between different scenes in one sculpture or drawing. Alternatively, you might use static forms and repetition to depict the monotony of the everyday.

Below and overleaf are past Koestler Awards entries that relate in different ways to 'A day in the life', which we hope will spark some inspiration. We can't wait to see what you come up with!

**But remember!** ...As always, our themed category will be just one of 52 categories - the others all being different artforms such as drawing, poem, choral music, and spoken word, to which you can enter work on any subject or theme. Full guidance notes on how to enter the 2023 Awards will be sent out in January 2023.



*Kept Together*, HM Prison Haverigg,  
Highly Commended Award for  
Painting, 2021



*Family Outing -  
Everlasting Memories*,  
HM Prison Buckley Hall,  
Commended Award for  
Sculpture, 2021

*Every Picture Tells a Story*,  
HM Prison Lancaster Farms,  
Highly Commended Award  
for Pastel, 2019





## Feedback Days

We are really excited to be currently developing a new pilot project running Feedback Days in prisons and secure hospitals.

Research we conducted in 2019-20, which many Koestler Associates contributed to through our surveys, found that feedback on their work is the thing many Koestler entrants value the most. Research participants told us they would like to receive feedback more frequently and to be able to speak directly with the experts providing feedback on their work. We hope our Feedback Day pilot project will help meet some of these needs.

So far we have run two Feedback Days - one with an art class in a prison, and one with a group of creative writers in a secure hospital, and we are busy planning more for the future! On Feedback Days, members of the Koestler team visit an establishment with a Koestler Awards judge and a former Koestler Awards entrant who is still working creatively post-release, to run a group session in which they share their own creative work, hear or see learners' work, and provide feedback on it. Participants are invited to speak about their own and each other's work, and we offer ideas about how to develop work further.

We took our Spoken Word judge Wanda and former Koestler Award winner and Mentee Christopher into St Andrew's Healthcare Birmingham to meet with a group of writers in the hospital. One of the participants has kindly written the following piece reflecting on the day, especially to be shared in this newsletter:

I have been writing anonymously for a few years now; mainly poetry and a thoughts journal. I have struggled with my mental health and I find creative writing to be very therapeutic and it has most certainly helped me in expressing my thoughts and feelings in a healthy way. It has helped me enormously in my recovery. I have entered the Koestler Awards this year and I have to say I was really excited to hear that Koestler judges were coming to Birmingham to visit us for a Feedback Day in dear old Brum.

The Feedback Day was so useful and extremely enjoyable. Wanda, who is a Koestler Spoken Word Judge, and Christopher, a former Koestler Mentee and Award Winner, came to visit us. There were seven of us in the group and we all shared our selected written pieces that were read out amongst the whole of the group through spoken word. It was incredibly powerful as we all bared our souls to one another and the words came alive, with a resonating energy that evoked many emotions of laughter, sadness, joy, and even tears. Listening to the creative writers was such a therapeutic and soothing experience. This was the highlight for me, as the words seem to me more powerful when they are read out rather than being on a page.

The feedback was really positive, constructive, and had an honesty and depth to it. We all had our unique writing styles and genres of writing; we all attentively and respectfully listened to each other's spoken words and offered our feedback to one another. I only wish we had longer as the session time went so quickly. I think that was due to the energy of the powerfully word lit education room. Hearing Wanda has inspired to me to write a rap; the rhythm and ways the words bounced was incredible. I am motivated more than ever to carry on writing. I am also going to practice spoken word reading as I recognise it is such a skilful thing to do.

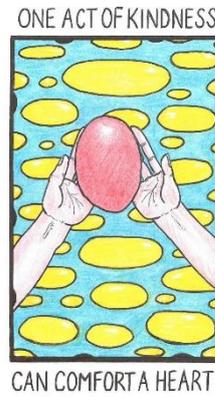
Thank you Koestler for visiting us and for inspiring and helping us on our creative writing therapy journeys. Big thanks to Wanda and Christopher for your time; you are both amazing.

## Greetings Cards

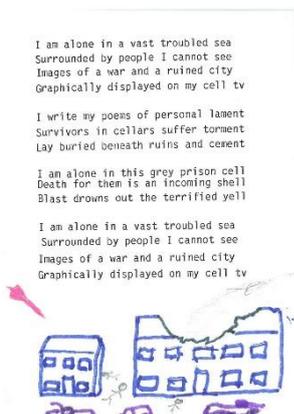
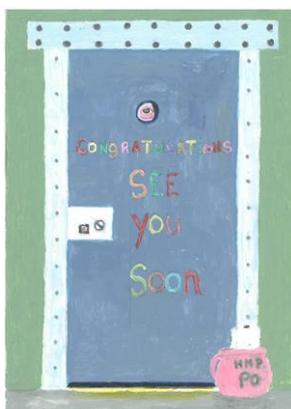
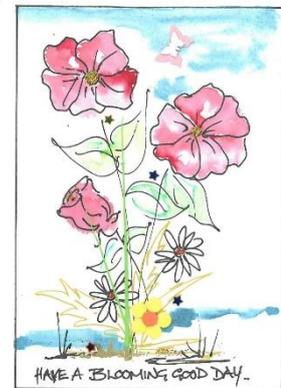
A huge thank you to everyone who responded to the greetings card activity in our Spring Associates newsletter. We received so many beautiful and humorous cards made by Associates, which we have been delighted to send on to our supporters. They were all wonderful and have been very happily received. Below is a selection of our favourites.



THE ONLY LIMIT IS  
YOUR OWN IMAGINATION.



The willow bends  
But does not break



## *The Future is Never Too Big, Supreme Court, July - October 2022*

Our display of work made by young people in secure settings or under supervision with a youth offending service has now opened at the Supreme Court! 29 pieces are on display in this iconic legal setting, including poetry, photography, woodwork, drawing, and mixed media works.



*The Future is Never Too Big* display



*TV People*,  
HM Young Offender  
Institution Cookham Wood,  
Painting, 2022

## 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 creative writing task set by Koestler Award winner, exhibited writer and former mentee, Christopher, in which everyday items become a source of inspiration! 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 let us know any 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](mailto:info@koestlerarts.org.uk)
- **call:** 020 8740 0333



*Art Therapy*, HM Prison Kilmarnock,  
Watercolour and Gouache, 2022

## More Ways to Get Involved

### Associates

Since 2016 we have been inviting entrants who would like more regular communication from Koestler Arts to sign up to be Associates. Associates receive regular newsletters (like this one!) with information about events and exhibitions, interviews with judges, tips for creating new work, and creative activities and opportunities. As you've read in this newsletter, we recently sent Associates greetings cards to decorate and asked them to help us select a themed category for next year's Awards.

Associates are also directly sent Awards entry forms, guidance notes, posters, and flyers at the start of every year, when we ask that they help us spread the word about the Koestler Awards within their establishments. They might stick posters up around their wing or education department, encourage others to enter the Awards, or help someone fill in an entry form.

If you're not already and would like to become a Koestler Associate, please complete the below slip and return this page to us in the Freepost envelope provided.

### Arts Mentoring

Since 2007 we have run the Koestler Arts Mentoring Scheme to support individuals who have been in prison to continue developing their creative work in the community. Successful applicants are matched with experienced local arts professionals - artists, writers, musicians and craftspeople - who have been specially trained by us to be Koestler mentors.

Mentees and mentors meet 7-10 times over a 12 month period, where together they identify and work towards the mentee's goals. These might include applying to a course, building up a portfolio of work, or developing techniques.

Mentees also maintain regular contact with us at Koestler and we offer them support and creative opportunities. In 2019 we held an exhibition of work made by ex-mentees, 'Our Journey' at the House of St Barnabas in London, we invited mentees to choose the 2021 Koestler Awards themed category, and we commission mentees to produce the content for our monthly Art Aid sheets.

A leaflet with more information on the scheme and how to apply is enclosed with this newsletter. If you would like an application form please complete the below slip and return this page to us in the Freepost envelope provided.

**Name:**

**Prison Number:**

**Address:**

Tick here to become a Koestler Associate

Tick here to be sent an application form for the Koestler Arts Mentoring Scheme