

Koestler Associates Newsletter - January 2022

Happy New Year!

Hello and Happy New Year from all of us at Koestler Arts. We hope you are keeping well. We've got an exciting year ahead as 2022 marks the 60th anniversary of the Koestler Awards! We hope you'll help us to celebrate by sharing your creative work again this year.

In this Associates newsletter we're rounding up the 2021 Awards and national exhibition and looking ahead to what's to come in 2022. Enclosed are the materials you'll need to enter the 2022 Awards, and our latest Art Aid sheet.

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 artists and writers who have directly engaged with Koestler 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.



What Next, St Mary's Hospital, Portrait

The latest Art Aid sheet is enclosed with this newsletter. It features a task set by Koestler Award winner, exhibited writer, and current mentee, Kanthé, which asks you to imagine the possibilities beyond a cell door. We hope you will enjoy giving it a try and would love to see your interpretations entered into the 2022 Koestler Awards!

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.

2021 Koestler Awards

Platinum Award Winners

At the end of last year, we published the 2021 Koestler Awards results and sent certificates and prize money to Award winners. Thanks to everyone who entered, and huge congratulations to those who won Awards! To celebrate your achievements and inspire future creative work, below is a selection of top Award winning 2021 entries made by Associates.

Mexican Art Galleries

Build your wall, old man
Build your wall
Raise it high with your Nazi brick
and dirty hands

Raise it high
and keep our darkness outside
incessantly writing
on your white walls
unintelligible letters
aliens stanzas
and gibberish

Mexican Art Galleries, HM Prison Frankland,
Platinum Award for Poem



Nuclear Radiation War,
HM Prison Winchester, Platinum Award for Sculpture



Tears and Sorrow, HM Prison Full Sutton,
Platinum Award for Mixed Media



Boat of Freedom, Field House, Platinum Award for Craft



Captive, NPS West Sussex, Platinum Award for Watercolour and Gouache
This portrait has been painted inside plastic food packaging!



Poultry In Motion, Koestler Arts Mentoring
Scheme, Platinum Award for Portrait

The I and The We

The I and The We was our 2021 national exhibition, held at London's Southbank Centre in the autumn. It featured 210 pieces of visual artwork, music and writing selected from entries to the 2021 Koestler Awards by artist Camille Walala and her sister, curator Sarah Ihler-Meyer.



Many of the selected works were bold in colour and ingenious in their use of materials; many were made in cell during lockdowns in the previous year. The varied selection reflected the wide range of artforms and themes we see among Koestler entries each year, and the depth and breadth of creative energy and talent among our entrants.

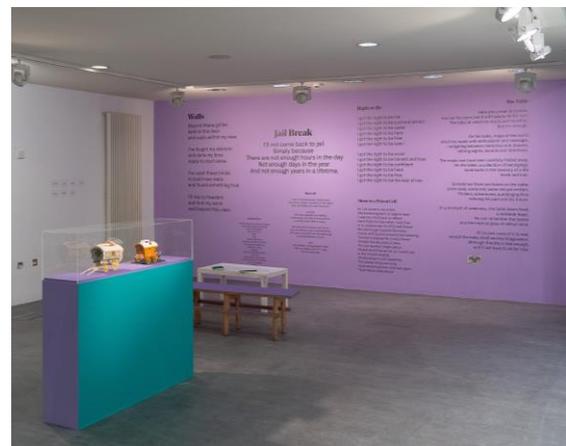
We were delighted by the positive reception to the exhibition from thousands of visitors and in national press coverage.

“One of the most thought-provoking exhibitions I’ve been to. What a masterpiece!”

“This was some of the most inspiring work I’ve seen...The skill and time it must have taken to create these is incredible and there are more original ideas here than I’ve seen all year.”

“It was great to come and be reminded of all the talent you guys have. Not even lockdown could stop you.”

- Exhibition visitors



Audience Choice Awards

Visitors to *The I and The We* completed feedback cards to vote for their favourite exhibited artworks and comment on what they liked about the pieces. More than 5500 feedback cards were completed in total and will be sent directly to the artists. The four pieces that received the most feedback won our Audience Choice Awards and the artists will receive an additional prize:



Summertime, HM Prison Shotts,
Commended Award for Painting
Audience Choice Bronze Award



Jurassic Dinosaur - T-Rex, HM Prison Whatton, Craft
Audience Choice Silver Award



Unmasked, HM Prison Barlinnie,
Highly Commended Award for Drawing
Audience Choice Gold Award



Old Meets New, HM Prison Whatton, Platinum Award for Drawing
Audience Choice Platinum Award

“You have absolutely blown my mind and transported me to another reality. After this covid pandemic your work has blown away my dusty cobwebs and reminded me to think big!”

“The level of detail is astonishing. It must have taken you ages. Such patience. I could look at this for hours and find new things each time. Incredible illustration - I love it!”

- Visitor feedback for *Old Meets New*

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 *The I and the We*, having not been able to in 2020. Our six 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 our 2021 Hosts to reflect on their experience in the role:

“[Visitors’] eyes light up when you tell them details about pieces or show them things that they might have missed. People say they are blown away by the skill and the talent, the imagination, and the depth of the work. They’re overcome sometimes. They did not expect to see what they’ve seen, or read what they’ve read, or watch what they’ve watched. Their perceptions are just blown out the water. And that includes some of the [criminal justice] professionals that come, and the professional artists.

I enjoy every aspect of this role. To be able to show the public the people behind the pictures; the people that produce the work and how they do that, is a joy.

You produced work during an incredibly hard time and to be creative during a time like that is something that many would have aspired to, and you’ve done it. And you’ve cheered everybody up this year. Everybody leaves uplifted.”

- Jo, Exhibition Host

“One of the things I’ve enjoyed most doing this job is learning more about the thought behind the pieces, and connecting with that through my own experiences, which I then get to share with the visiting public. It gives them more than just seeing a piece. They’re learning the history of it, what’s behind it, what it means to the artist and what it means to us hosts.

It’s done a hell of a lot for my confidence and it’s allowing me now to do new things, things I definitely never thought I would. I’m going to have to completely re-evaluate how I view myself. Because I’m not the sort of person that just sits back and observes what happens anymore. I find myself taking an active part in things now.

What I would like to say to the artists is thank you. I’ve loved learning about the pieces. It’s certainly opened my eyes more about art. This job has allowed me to appreciate art and getting to know the artists through their work and what they’re saying about their work has been a real privilege.”

- Ron, Exhibition Host



An exhibition host discussing artwork with visitors

Koestler Voices

2021 saw the publication of our third poetry anthology, *Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons, Vol. 3*. It includes 50 Award winning poems from the 2020 and 2021 Koestler Awards, selected by editor Martha Sprackland, and a foreword by Jackie Kay, award-winning author and former National Poet for Scotland. It is available to buy on our website and at a number of bookshops, and will be sent to prison libraries this year.

“It is brave to write the words you cannot speak and brave to let others read them. Coming from the inside, up and down the country, the poems offer small chinks of light, shine the torch on vivid memories, show us what the poets have held dear, remind us that we are all defined by love and by loss.”

- Jackie Kay

Beard Haiku, Bracton Centre,
Platinum Award for Poem

Beard Haiku

Shaved face
No
More

Scary look
Maybe

But Dad
Don't
Look like
Me

We held our annual Voices from Prison event at the Southbank Centre in November. This year the event was hosted by Koestler Trustee, artist and podcaster Gary Mansfield, and featured a number of poets and Koestler mentees performing poems from the latest anthology to a packed audience!

Poetry entries to the 2022 Awards will be considered for the fourth volume of *Koestler Voices*, to be published in 2023.

Razor Wire

Walking back from gym, the sun
this late spring evening, lights upon
the coils of razor wire.

And, for a moment, we behold
a blazing filament of gold
that sets the fence on fire.

Razor Wire, Merseyside Probation Service,
Gold Award for Poem

Joelle Taylor

We're very proud to share that Joelle Taylor, who judged the poetry category in the 2021 Koestler Awards, has this month won the TS Eliot poetry prize, one of the most prestigious prizes in British poetry, for her collection *C+nto & Othered Poems*.

Artwork Returns

We have begun the process of returning unsold visual artwork from the 2021 Awards to entrants. This work will all be sent out by the end of March 2022.



In This Together (Don't Forget About Us), HM Prison Dovegate,
May Day Thursday 2021 Platinum Award for Ceramics

2022 Koestler Awards

As a Koestler Associate we hope you'll be excited to enter our Awards again in 2022, and to encourage others to do so. Enclosed with this newsletter are the resources you will need. Thank you so much for helping us spread the word about our work, we really appreciate your continued support, and can't wait to start receiving your entries in the coming months!

If those you encourage to enter would like to become Associates too, they can tick the relevant box on their entry form and will be added to our mailing list.

Entrants can send visual artwork, writing and music to us from now until the deadline on **7th April 2022**. It is important that every entry is sent with a corresponding entry form, and that every entry form has been signed by a member of prison or probation staff.

The enclosed resources include:

- **Guidance notes** explaining the terms and conditions of entering the Awards: what you can enter, how to enter, our artform categories, and the awards cycle timeline.
- **Entry forms**. Each entrant can enter up to 5 pieces of work, in any of our artform categories. If you don't want to enter 5 pieces, you can always pass some of these forms on to someone else to use.
- **Posters**. We would be really grateful if you could help us to promote this year's Awards by displaying these on your wing, in your education department, or at your probation office, and telling someone who doesn't know about Koestler how to get involved.

These materials are also being sent to education departments in establishments, so you can direct others who are interested in entering to get entry forms from there, or to write to us to be sent them directly.

Themed Category

A reminder that for 2022, our themed category is 'Taste'. We're looking forward to seeing what you are inspired to create!



Variety Box, HM Prison Bronzefield,
Under 25s Special Award for Sculpture

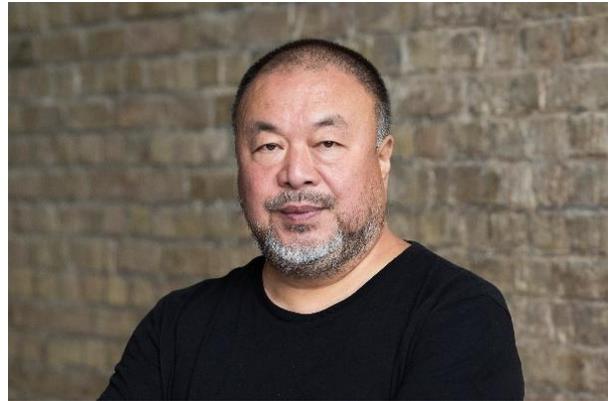


Family Meal,
HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Cornton Vale,
Themed Category: Together

National Exhibition

We are thrilled to announce that our 60th anniversary national exhibition will be curated by artist Ai Weiwei!

Ai is a multimedia artist who also works in film, writing and social media. From architecture to installations, social media to documentaries, Ai uses a wide range of artforms as expressions of new ways for his audiences to examine society and its values. He always seeks to integrate his different roles as an artist, an activist, and a citizen, and to create an effective interplay between form and language in his explorations, documentary recordings, and exhibitions. In 2011 Ai was secretly detained by police in China for 81 days and released without any charges against him.



Ai Weiwei (image courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio)

When we ask entrants to suggest future judges and curators to us each year, Ai Weiwei's name always comes up. We hope you will be as excited about this news as we are!

Ai will spend time with us this summer looking at the visual artwork, music and writing entered into the 2022 Koestler Awards, and make a selection of around 200 pieces to be displayed at London's Southbank Centre in the autumn. Make sure you enter by 7th April to have your work considered by Ai for exhibition in this very special year!

Reminder

Please note that to remain an Associate you must enter the 2022 Koestler Awards. If for any reason you are unable to enter, or don't wish to this year, 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

**Take care and stay safe,
The Koestler Team**

The Flock, HM Prison Holme House,
First-Time Entrant Award for Painting

