

Koestler Associates Newsletter Spring 2021

Hello from Koestler Arts!

A belated Happy New Year from us in this, our first Associates newsletter of 2021.

After another few months of working remotely we are really pleased to slowly be returning to our office this month, and especially to be met there by an ever-growing pile of 2021 Koestler Awards entries! Keep them coming!

We hope you are managing to stay well and creative amidst the ongoing restrictions. At Koestler, we have been adapting our plans to try to make entering our Awards this year as easy and rewarding as possible.

We're delighted to be sharing some exciting Awards and exhibitions updates with you in this newsletter, and hope you'll help us spread the word!



2021 entries arriving at the Koestler Arts Centre

Reminder

Please note that to remain an Associate you must enter the 2021 Koestler Awards. If for any reason you are unable to enter, or simply don't wish to this year, but would like to remain an Associate, please write to us to let us know. Please also let us know any changes to your address and contact details, so we can ensure future Associates 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

*Resting, HM Young Offender Institution Feltham,
Commended Award for Printmaking*



2021 Awards

Awards deadline extended to Tuesday, 01 June 2021

We heard from many of you that extending our Awards deadline last year either enabled you to enter work where you would otherwise have missed the April deadline, or helped fill your time in the first few months of lockdown as you created extra pieces to send to us.

As restrictions in establishments and the community continue, we have decided to extend our deadline again this year in the hopes as many people as possible will be able to create and enter work for the 2021 Awards.

Awards entry limit lifted to 10 pieces per entrant

Along with our extended deadline, we are once again lifting the entry limit from 5 to 10 pieces per entrant for the 2021 Awards. We recognise that, during lockdown, some entrants may struggle to get advice on which artworks to enter into the Awards, or may have submitted work to us already and now want to use the extended deadline as an opportunity to make more.

We hope these changes will make it easier and more rewarding to enter the Awards during another challenging year. As ever you can send your visual artwork, music or writing to us using our Freepost address, and each entry should be sent with an entry form signed by a member of prison, hospital, or probation staff.

As Associates, we hope you will be excited to enter the Awards this year, and that you'll help us spread the word amongst your peers and encourage others to enter. If you'd like additional entry forms or copies of our guidance notes, please write to us and we can post these out to you.



Poker Game,
HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Parc,
Avis Allum Bronze Award for Painting

2020 Artwork returns

As we've been working remotely so far this year, the return of 2020 visual artworks to establishments and entrants has unfortunately been delayed. We're pleased to say returns will start up again in early April as our arts team return to the office, and your entries will be on their way back to you soon. Thank you for your patience as we make our way through this process over the next few months.

Koestler Voices Vol. 3

Every two years we publish a poetry anthology, *Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons*, showcasing some of the best poetry entered into the Koestler Awards, and in 2021 we will be producing our third volume. The works will be selected from poems entered into the 2020 and 2021 Koestler Awards, so if you'd like to be in with a chance of being featured in the book, consider entering our poetry category this year!

Exhibitions

We're delighted that it looks like our 2021 regional and national exhibitions will be able to go ahead - if a little later than planned! Whilst dates are subject to change according to government restrictions, we're pleased to be able to share some information about what they will look like.

My Path: Art by People in the Criminal Justice System, Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. 17 May - 20 June 2021.



My Path features 61 pieces of visual art, music and poetry entered into the 2020 Koestler Awards from establishments in Yorkshire. The works were chosen by a group of young people working with Sheffield Youth Justice Service, who were led by Sheffield-based artist Sarah Jane Palmer through a series of socially-distanced curation workshops at the gallery. The young people brought their own unique insight and imagination to the selection, drawing out themes including time, journeys, and the future of the planet.



“[Being selected for the exhibition] is an unbelievable feeling. It fills you with real confidence in your own self-worth.”

- Exhibited Artist

“I didn't believe I'm any good at art and being selected to exhibit helps me see I'm okay. It's been a long journey for me.”

- Exhibited Artist

“I think the art looks good when it's in clusters together not in lines or order, let the public come in and tell the story themselves, everyone's story will be different'.”

- Curator

Power: Freedom to Create, National Justice Museum, Nottingham. 17 May - 31 October 2021.

Power will showcase contemporary and historic artwork made in criminal justice settings alongside newly commissioned work by six artists and writers. Placed together, the works magnify a diversity of creative skill and imagination under the theme of 'power and creativity'. The selection includes 23 works entered into the 2020 Koestler Awards, chosen by the Museum during a number of digital curating sessions with Koestler. The Museum is on the site of a historic courthouse and jail in the city.



Thinking Man, HM Prison Dovegate, Highly Commended Award for Ceramics

Soul Journey to Truth, HOME, Manchester. 17 May - 6 June 2021.

The exhibition features over 100 works selected from entries to the 2020 Koestler Awards from the North West of England.

The works have been chosen by Lady Unchained, who is a poet, performer, facilitator, broadcaster, and radio host for National Prison Radio. She is also founder and creative director of Unchained Poetry, an artistic platform for artists with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

The exhibition features many works that tell stories - some fragile, some powerful - each one created by someone finding their voice through the arts. Visitors will travel through open landscapes, forests, a black history dedication, and a pause for self-reflection. They will be able to access a soundtrack of women's voices, and to read song lyrics and poetry from across the region and beyond.



Lady Unchained



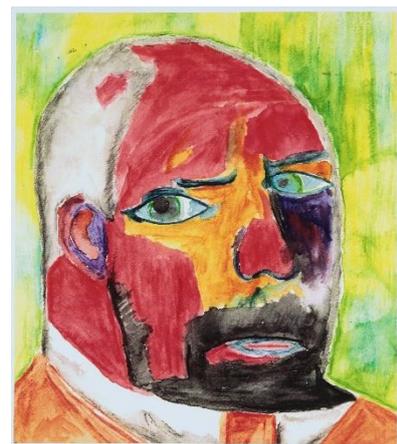
Frustration,
HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Forest Bank,
First Time Entrant Award for Drawing

For the title of the exhibition, Lady Unchained was inspired by American abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth, and by the word Sojourner, meaning a person who resides temporarily in a place not primarily their own, who relies on the good-will of those in that place for their continued existence.

National Exhibition, Southbank Centre, London. October - December 2021.

We will return to our usual (indoor!) exhibition space at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, for our National Exhibition this autumn, after our 2020 showcase was displayed outside on the windows of the Centre's buildings while it was closed at the end of last year.

We are delighted that designer Camille Walala will be curating our 2021 National Exhibition and look forward to welcoming her later in the year to review your entries and make her selection.



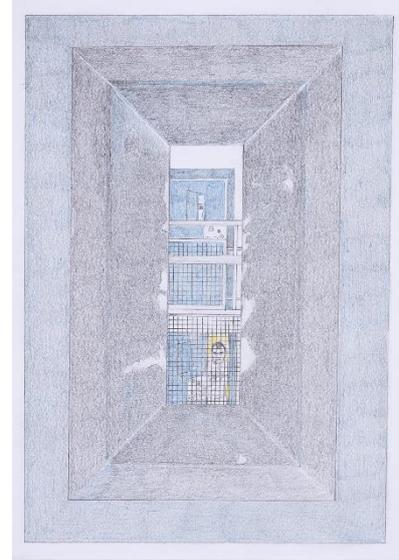
Portrait, HM Prison Cardiff,
First-Time Entrant Award for Portrait

Andy's Story

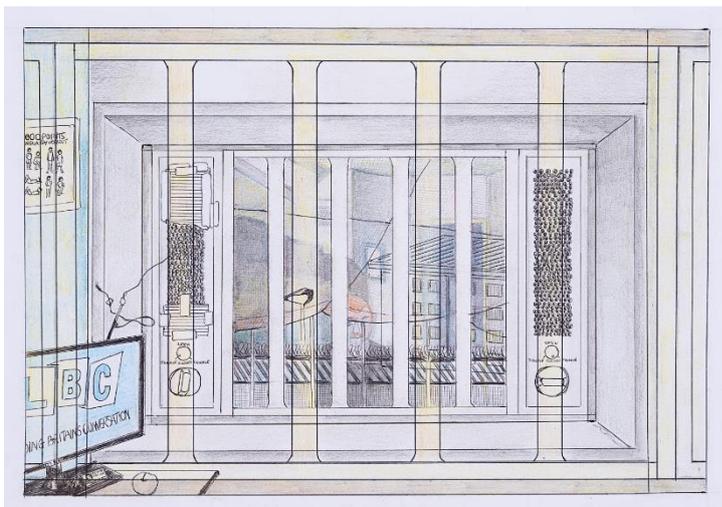
We asked Andy, one of the artists whose work will be exhibited in our North West exhibition *Soul Journey to Truth*, to share his experience of engaging with Koestler Arts over the past 10 years; as an entrant, Award winner, mentee and exhibited artist:

“My journey with Koestler Arts began in 2011 - I had no paper and no pencil, so I borrowed a biro and hastily drew an ink drawing on the blank side of an application form. I was astounded when Koestler informed me that my artwork had been selected for their annual exhibition, and the unexpected success inspired me to continue entering the awards.

Soon after release in 2017 Koestler appointed me an Art Mentor, giving me the opportunity to visit renowned Galleries hosting amazing exhibitions. I couldn't believe I was looking at Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Rubens in the flesh rather than in an art book! Koestler encouraged me to enrol at Art College in 2018 ... so I did but unfortunately I also suffered a relapse into Alcohol dependence and within a matter of months ended back inside - a defeated soul. But during the 14 months I regained the discipline and enthusiasm to draw. In June 2020 I was - once again - released and recently finished another Mural in the basement of the Approved Premises.”



Meds! HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Forest Bank,
Themed Category: Window



“I’m indebted to Koestler Arts for their support through the dark times. Koestler gave me the opportunity to change my darkened outlook and explore the illuminating World of Art.”

Reflection, HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Forest Bank,
Themed Category: Window

Art Aid

In response to the coronavirus lockdown, we have been sharing Art Aid activity sheets with simple creative tasks that can be done in cell. We know how important creativity is to our entrants so we wanted to provide some inspiration in a very difficult time. Each sheet includes a task devised by a current or former Koestler mentee, and some information about their own story and experience with Koestler Arts.

New sheets are added to our website twice every month, and we include the most recent sheet with each Associates newsletter - we hope you’ll enjoy the enclosed sheet, with tasks devised by former Koestler Award Winner and mentee Mark. Please contact a member of your education department if you’d like to see more and can’t access our website.

A note from our supporters

Each year, thousands of individuals and charitable trusts show their support for the Koestler Awards and recognise the importance of creativity through making donations and volunteering their time. Last year, at the start of the pandemic we braced ourselves, expecting to see the donations we rely on to go down dramatically. What we actually saw amazed us.

Supporters let us know that they would stick with us through the pandemic, and hundreds of people got in touch to ask how they could help the fantastic artists whose work they saw on our social media, website and at exhibitions. This year we have received our biggest gift since we were founded, and at Christmas we received 3 times more donations from individuals than in 2019, despite the economic crisis. All the gifts we receive go towards making sure the Koestler Awards can continue, and we can carry on exhibiting, awarding and celebrating creativity in secure settings.

To mark the year that's been and share the goodwill we received from supporters throughout 2020, here are some of their words, encouragement and stories:

Hi there,
How are you? Hope you are ok.
Writing to say congratulations on
being part of the awards - it's
amazing to do something like
that. Hope you do really well,
but even taking part
is brilliant + the standard
of art is amazing - there
is so much skill around.
Sorry if my writing is messy -
I always used to get told off
at school for messy writing.
Hope 2021 goes on for you.

KOESTLER ARTS
KOESTLER AWARDS ENTRANT, 2020

And a handwriting translation:

“Hi there,
How are you? Hope you are ok.
Writing to say congratulations on
being part of the Awards. It’s
amazing to do something like that.
Hope you do really well, but even
taking part is brilliant and the
standard of art is amazing - there is
so much skill around. Sorry if my
writing is messy, hope you can read
it. I always used to get told off at
school for messy writing. Hope 2021
goes ok for you.”

**“The arts help
us lose
ourselves in
the present.
Keep strong.”**

**“Fantastic talent
revealed in our
prisons thanks to
@KoestlerArts”**

“I am a Prison visitor, so at the moment, I am not able to go and see the men. Instead I am continuing to write, I still think it important to let them all know that even in these extremely difficult times, they are not forgotten or given up on. Take great care of yourselves.”

**“I can feel the emotions of
the artist in prison art.
Incredible that such beauty
can be produced in such
austere surroundings. Mind
blowing!”**

“Amazing work, it is stunning to see the beautiful expression of humanity and ingenuity of those behind the ‘walls.’”

**“In some way I hope the relatively
minor restrictions to our freedom
that we are experiencing are helping
people to refocus on what’s
important and perhaps understand a
little of how the separation from
friends and family affects people so
greatly when they are in prison.”**

As an IMB member the Art room
was always on my rounds and I
watched the detainees creating some beautiful
projects with awe
When I retired I was thrilled to be given a
wonderful collage of brightly coloured and
decorated hands which had been done by
many men from different countries showing their
national flags.
It means a lot to me to show my family that I have the
talent and ability to create some good work. I feel
proud that I can say "I did that!"
It is now on my office wall and I think of you
all as I write.

KOESTLER ARTS
KOESTLER AWARDS ENTRANT, 2020