



Koestler Associates Newsletter Summer 2019

Hello from Koestler Arts! The past few months have been a very busy and exciting time for us. We received thousands of 2019 Koestler Awards entries, which have now been logged and judged; we held two regional exhibitions in the East and South East of England; and have just opened our national exhibition at London's Southbank Centre. In this newsletter we'll update you on all our recent activities and exciting things still to come!

Koestler Awards

Thank you for your wonderful entries! We received 7610 pieces of visual art, craft, music and writing into this year's Koestler Awards, and our staff, judges and exhibition curators have been as impressed with the quality and variety as ever. We were thrilled to receive everything from delicate watercolour landscapes and poems about family pets to sculptures made from nitrous oxide canisters and a matchstick model village.



Judging

This year's judging process is now complete! Almost 100 experts from the worlds of art, music and writing visited our Koestler Arts Centre to view, listen to and read the thousands of Awards entries we received. They gave out over 2000 awards and wrote lots of feedback to our entrants. This year our judges included Emma Bridgewater, Hot Chip, the British Film Institute, Edmund Clark, and former Koestler Arts Mentees.

We spoke with Rachel Kelly, Joelle Taylor and Tobi Kyeremateng about their experience judging this year's Poetry entries:

What has stood out to you today?

J: The freedom that prisoners find in writing. You get a sense that for many of them it's the first time they've found their pens and realised that a blank piece of paper can be a window or an escape tunnel. There's a great sense of courage and loss as well, and grief, and I think that comes through in every poem no matter what it's about.

T: The creativity and imagery stood out to me. Even though a lot of the work talks about similar themes, prisons and what they look like, there are so many different ways of describing that, in ways I would never think of.

How have you found the judging process?

J: What's really important for people entering to understand is that judging is subjective. You've got three different people with strong proclivities, things we like and don't like. Take that into consideration for anything you enter.



R: I really salute the courage of anybody entering. Especially the subject matter, most of it is pretty deep. There are a few more light-hearted nature poems, or more humorous ones. But 80-90% are people going very deep into their psyche and emotional truth.

J: It's one of the most distressing, alienating experiences a human being can live through, being othered and kept away from the rest of the world. They let you into that moment. The poems are like little films, like the pen is a camera and they're showing you a tiny bit of what life is like for them. It's a privilege and an honour to be allowed into that space.

Do you have any advice for poets entering next year?

J: Just write like you believe yourself...Remember your pen is a camera, so when you're writing metaphors, what we're actually saying is take us into the room where you are. Don't just tell us you're locked in a room, take me into the room and show me what it looks like.

R: Sometimes we think that poetic techniques are scary; rhyme and rhythm and metaphors and similes. The way I think of it is that the poet's voice is crying out to be heard, and these are just ways to intensify their voice and get that voice out in an even stronger way. Don't be scared of these techniques. They're not there to put you off, they're there to amplify your voice so we can hear it even more and understand what you're trying to say.

T: Enjoy it - enjoy the process of building something. And enjoy the editing process of stripping away the things that you might want to keep for yourself, or that you might not want other people to know. You may end up with three completely different poems, one is the one you want to submit to the world, and one is the one you want to keep to yourself.

Exhibitions

We Made This, Turner Contemporary March - May 2019

Our first exhibition in the South-East was held at Turner Contemporary, Margate this Spring. The exhibition featured 75 artworks created by over 230 individual artists from establishments and on probation in Kent and Sussex. It was curated by a group of people on probation in the region. The exhibition was hugely popular, attracting around 84,000 visitors!



*"I have never been so moved by an exhibition.
I am in my late 60s and will remember this exhibition all my life."*
- Visitor



A Feeling We All Share, Snape Maltings August 2019

An exhibition curated by our Art Manager Jo Tapp, featuring around 100 pieces of visual art, writing and music entered into the 2019 Koestler Awards from the East of England. The selection was themed around three songs composed by men at nearby HM Prison Warren Hill.

"This is a beautiful exhibition. Haunting, honest, hopeful and real. We have all related to this exhibition today. Thank you for bringing humanity to Snape - we could all end up in places that inhibit and challenge - it is powerful to see the creativity of those imprisoned."
- Visitor

Our Journey, House of St Barnabas April - September 2019

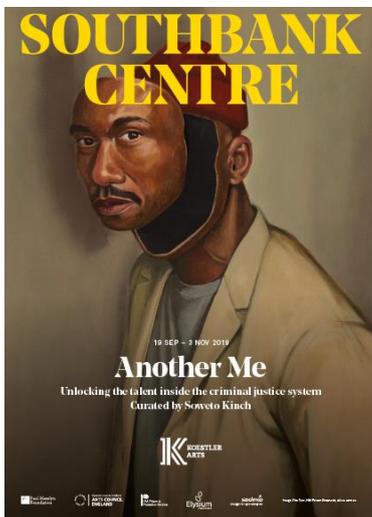
An exhibition celebrating the work of ten artists who have benefitted from our Mentoring Programme, which supports ex-prisoners in maintaining their arts interest and practice in the community.



OUR JOURNEY

"I found lots of opportunities to involve myself in the local art scene and develop further through skill sharing and voluntary roles."

- Exhibited artist and ex-mentee



Another Me, Southbank Centre September - November 2019

Our 2019 national exhibition curated by award winning jazz saxophonist and MC Soweto Kinch is now open! The exhibition features 150 pieces of visual art, writing and music entered into the 2019 Koestler Awards and is hosted by ex-prisoner exhibition hosts. Soweto hopes his varied and lively selection will spotlight the diversity and depth of experience within our criminal justice system.

*"I had an overwhelming feeling of self-worth. It's a great feeling, especially when you tell your family and they're saying they're "proud of you". Wow, you can't put it into words.
You never think you would hear that said to you again!"*
- Exhibited artist

Awards Results, Feedback and Certificates

2019 Koestler Awards results have now been published on our website! Entrants can call or write to us if they have difficulty accessing this online list or have any results queries. Our dedicated team of volunteers have been working hard to ensure as many entries as possible receive feedback from us. Feedback and Certificates will be sent out to entrants by the end of October.

Associates Day

We are delighted to be hosting an event for our Associates and their friends and families again at this year's national exhibition. The event will take place on Friday 18th October from 1-3pm. We have enclosed with this newsletter an invite to the event that you can send to friends or family who would like to attend. On the day, guests will be welcomed by Koestler staff and offered tea and coffee, and private tours of the exhibition.

The event is free but booking is compulsory. To book, guests should contact Charis Dishman, Arts and Outreach Officer: charis@koestlerarts.org.uk - 020 8740 0333.

Surveys

At Koestler Arts we are currently doing some work to evaluate our impact and develop our work to better support our entrants in the future. We are asking as many people as possible to share their feedback of engaging with Koestler to get the best possible sense of how we can meaningfully develop future projects.

We have enclosed two styles of feedback forms and would be very grateful if you would complete one (or both!) and return them to us using the Freepost envelope provided. Feedback Form 1 is a questionnaire style form that asks respondents to answer specific questions with tick boxes and short text answers. Feedback Form 2 is a more open-ended question that allows for essay format or more creative responses. If you choose to respond to Feedback Form 2 please consider responding with creative writing, poetry, or drawing! If you do not wish to complete a form, but know someone who would, please feel free to pass yours on. Thank you in advance for your help with this!

Mentoring

We have an exciting new poster resource to help us publicise our mentoring scheme! Please find copies of our brand new poster enclosed and help us spread the word by putting up a poster where someone else can see it!

Rebrand

You might notice we have changed our name and logo! Since May this year, we have become 'Koestler Arts' rather than the 'Koestler Trust'. This reflects our desire to be clearer about what it is we do as a charity. 'Trust' has often been misinterpreted as a funding organisation, rather than as an arts charity that has to fundraise for everything we do. We have also changed our strapline from 'Arts by Offenders' to 'Unlock the Talent Inside' in response to feedback from our entrants, who have consistently asked us to rethink the term 'offender'. Below are our new contact details:

Freepost address: FREEPOST KOESTLER ARTS

Website: www.koestlerarts.org.uk

Email: info@koestlerarts.org.uk

Reminder

Please remember to write and notify us of changes to your address and contact details, so we can ensure Associates newsletters, certificates, feedback, awards and sales money, and returned artwork reach you!

