

KOESTLER ARTS + ART AID

Hello from Koestler Arts!

Koestler Arts + Art Aid sheets suggest creative tasks that can be done in-cell. For most all you need is paper and a pencil - though if you have further materials please use them.

Please note that the 2021 Koestler Awards deadline has now passed (1 June 2021) and Art Aid sheets will be produced on a monthly basis again. New Art Aid sheets will be available from the first Monday of every month.

For each Art Aid sheet Koestler Arts are commissioning an artist/writer who has directly engaged with Koestler to set a creative task.

June 2021, Issue 1

This Art Aid sheet celebrates 'Soul Journey to Truth', a Koestler Arts exhibition for the North West of England at HOME, Manchester, as part of the Ripples of Hope Festival. It runs from 17 May - 6 June and was curated by Lady Unchained.

The task was set by Koestler Award winner, mentee and exhibited artist, Andy, who's work was displayed in 'Soul Journey to Truth'.

My Story

My journey with Koestler Arts began in 2011 while on remand - I noticed posters around the wing promoting the Koestler Awards. I'd been caught in the revolving door of the criminal justice system as a consequence of my dependency on alcohol and was now facing a long-term sentence. With nothing to lose I decided to enter. My pad-mate lent me a pencil, eraser, the edge of a book as a ruler and not forgetting the 'razor-blade' to sharpen my pencil. I didn't have any plain A4 paper so I used the back of an application form.

I sat cross-legged on the top bunk and began to create my masterpiece. After a couple of days, I'd created a sketch of myself sitting in a cell looking down at the floor. I got my PO to sign the application form and popped it in the mail box... a day after the closing date. Several months later I was surprised to hear that my picture had been chosen to be exhibited and even more astonished to be informed that one of the visitors had paid £150 for my artwork to be hung in their home!

Art was my number one pastime in prison. I find drawing keeps me focussed and opens my mind to the beautiful alternative world to the monotonous prison regime. Over the years my relationship with Koestler Arts has motivated me to develop my passion. A decade since my initial submission to Koestler, I've won

several Awards including Gold, Silver and Bronze. I've been appointed a mentor and together we have visited galleries across the country. I'm honoured to have exhibited four of my artworks in the 'Soul Journey to Truth' exhibition at HOME in Manchester.



Image: *Outlook*, HM Prison and Young Offender Institution Forest Bank,

Themed Category: Window, Exhibited in *Soul Journey to Truth*, HOME, Manchester

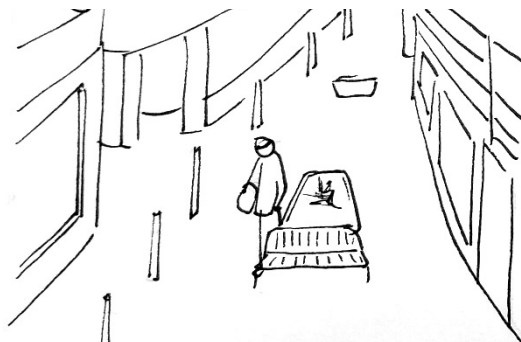
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My Task - Places I've Lived

During the last 6 months of my sentence and approaching my 40th birthday I reflected on the path I'd taken that led me to where I was. I thought about the places I'd lived and realised the tally amounted to over 30 different places. I decided to sketch each one. I'd lived at a lot of temporary addresses for homeless people and started making rough sketches of these places imagining the sound of traffic, the rooms I shared and other people I'd lived with. I especially focussed on my approach to the building and my leaving the building, thinking about my daily coming and going. Before long I had over 30 sketches done. I refined these with coloured pencil, using pen to define the outlines. I left prison armed with a visual journal of all the places I'd lived since my earliest memory; a very useful tool if you find yourself urban-sketching for real, once your released from custody.



For this task, I invite you to do the same. Start by thinking about everywhere you've lived and make a list. Then illustrate your list with some simple pencil thumbnail sketches with lots of constructive lines. When you're happy with your outlines, go over them with pen to define them. Adding yourself to the image gives it a personal touch.



You can develop your thumbnails into larger drawings using coloured pencils, watercolour or felt tips. Your final drawings could include words describing your memories of the years associated with that particular place or you could write a short paragraph alongside each drawing to develop the series into a graphic novel.

This exercise helped me to consolidate my past, provide a reference to my chaotic lifestyle and allow me to move on. I hope it helps you too.

This was my first address after leaving Approved premises (Hostel). Things started off well however having no restrictions on my living circumstances it was an open door to the dreadful world of alcohol dependency.



Images courtesy of Andy
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