KOESTLER ARTS + ART AID

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.

The 2022 Koestler Awards will begin accepting new entries from January.

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

November 2021
The task was set by Koestler Award winner and mentee, Chad.

My Story
As my journey through the judicial system was at midpoint my mind started to rekindle a passion of mine, which was drawing portraits.

On the outside, with so many work commitments and my physical and mental health rapidly getting worse, my mind was focussed on other things.

Once in prison I had plenty of time on my hands. This is when my passion for drawing kicked in. I was inspired by other inmates whose drawings were fantastic. I thought: I need to do this, to focus on positive and creative things.

I hadn't drawn for 30 years. My skill was lost or, to say the least, was buried deep within my mind.

With the help from a friend inside I managed to extract that which was deeply hidden. With my friend's guidance and patience I slowly started to get results.

I had heard that the eyes are the windows to the soul so I concentrated on eyes in my drawings. I considered eyes to be the hardest part of drawing a face - if you capture the eyes you capture the face of the person you're drawing.

If your thinking is the same as mine was in the beginning then don't think negative. Think positive. Think of your journey to drawing successfully as a labour of love.

Image: 3 Portraits (1 of 3), Carpenter House Approved Premises, Gold Award for Portrait, 2019
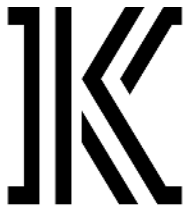
My Task - Drawing Eyes

If you can remember a few basic steps your drawing of eyes will improve.

Note before you begin: Remember the word speaks for itself - the *eyeball* is a *ball* shape. And the eyelid is a piece of skin that wraps around the ball, so most of the time it will mirror the ball shape, wrapping over the top and underneath. There are differences in appearance of eyes but the basic shape is the same.
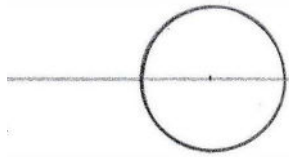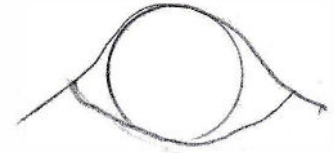
Step 1: This is how I start drawing eyes. Start by drawing a horizontal line and draw a ball shape through the middle of the line.

Step 2: You are ready to draw the eyelids on. A common mistake people make is drawing the eyelids around the eyeball to expose the whole ball. Look in the mirror at your own eye. You will notice that you don't see all of the ball. The top is covered as well as the bottom.
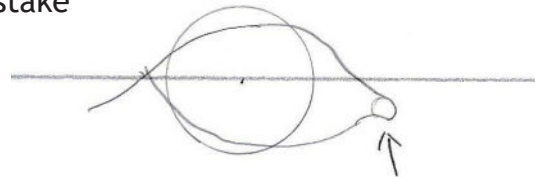
Step 3: Next you need a little space to draw a tear duct. So in the corner of the eye draw a little circle. Then rub out the bits of the eyeball that are covered by the eyelids and half of the little circle too.
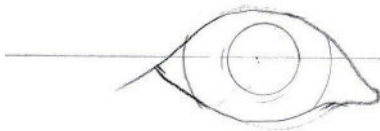
Step 4: Now use the center line that you've drawn as a guide to draw a smaller circle (the pupil) drawing it so the line runs through the middle just like the eyeball. Then rub out the line running through the eye.

Step 5: Next draw a smaller circle just in the top corner as illustrated. This circle is the bit of the eye that has caught the light. For this example I've chosen the top right, but in lots of occasions the light could be captured in a different part of the eye. It could be square shaped too like a reflection of a window.
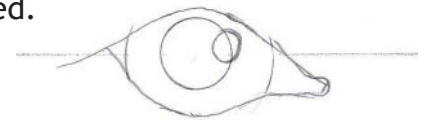
Step 6: Now colour the pupil in but leave the little circle clear. Draw a line at the top of the eye. This is where the eye lid will be. Also draw a faint line at the bottom of the eye. This is the bottom lid.
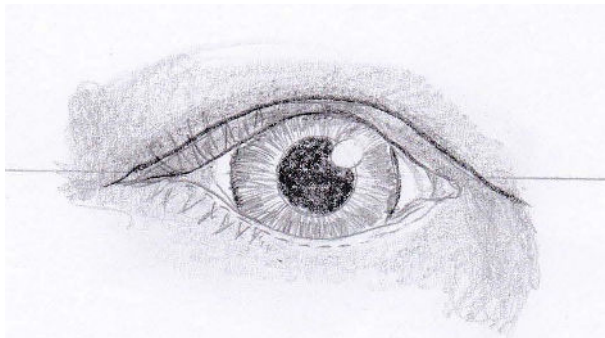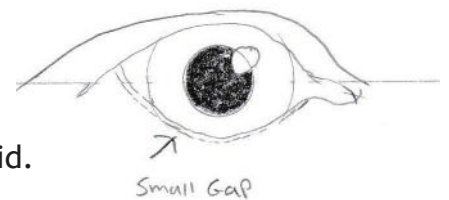
Step 7: Finally, the shading. This is a very important part of the drawing because it makes the eye look more realistic. It makes it stand out. The dark shading will be the parts of the eye that are deeper so there's less light getting to them.
I use a fine line technique to shade in the iris. You can start off light and then get a darker to represent deeper coloured parts of the iris.

With practice you will achieve a wonderful picture you can be proud of.
All the best and good luck!