

Koestler Arts produces monthly Art Aid sheets featuring creative tasks that can be done in cell and with just paper and a pencil. This sheet has been made with support from The Arts Society Northleach.

Although the 2023 Koestler Awards deadline passed on 6 April, we hope these sheets will inspire you to remain creative and perhaps try something new. New Art Aid sheets are available from the first Monday of every month.

## NOVEMBER 2023

For each Art Aid sheet, we commission an artist or writer who has engaged with Koestler Arts to set a creative task and share their experience with creativity. This month we asked Koestler Award winner, exhibited artist, and mentee, Colin. One of Colin's paintings has been selected for display in our upcoming national exhibition, IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

### My Story

I was always drawing the latest motorbike or fast car as a child, copying from pictures. But I struggled to be creative and original during art in school and so failed my art GCSE. After this, I never picked up a pencil to draw for a very long time.

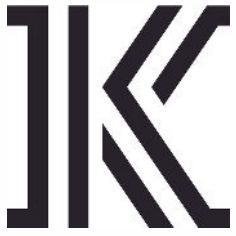
My time in the criminal justice system was difficult, but taking up drawing again helped me through. Little drawings on post it notes and scraps of paper to send out to family with my weekly letter kept me busy, as well as making greetings cards, first for myself and then for others on the wing. I didn't enter the Koestler Awards while in prison, as I thought my work wouldn't be anywhere near good enough. But I did manage to teach myself to paint, by reading and copying from every art book the prison library had.

After release from prison, my probation officer saw some of my artwork and encouraged me to enter the Koestler Awards. I did hesitantly but was surprised when one of my paintings was exhibited in Koestler's national exhibition, receiving some wonderful feedback from members of the public. This really inspired me to take my art more seriously.

I was then accepted onto the Koestler Mentorship scheme and with my mentor's guidance and support, I have started to develop my artwork in creative and original ways, trying lots of new drawing and painting techniques with innovative and varied materials.



*The Conflict Within,*  
Koestler Arts Mentoring Scheme,  
Painting



## My Task: Experimental Drawing

We often hear that for artwork to be appreciated and admired, it should be original and inventive - copying or relying heavily on someone else's work will not achieve this. To create something original is difficult at the best of times, but particularly when in prison. Often all we have for inspiration are photos or books from the prison library, which makes coming up with something unique very difficult!

The drawing exercise below explores some techniques that may be new to you, but please give them a try - you never know, you may come away with different ways of expressing yourself through your artwork.

First, think of a song that you really love, that you know well and have a true connection to.

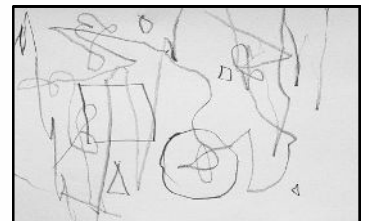
**Step 1 - Rhythm:** Hold the pencil in your favoured drawing hand in a sideways manner and think of the song you have chosen. Let your hand respond to the music as you play it in your head, with up and down vertical strokes of the pencil. Don't press too hard and allow the pencil to come on and off the paper as you make the vertical strokes.



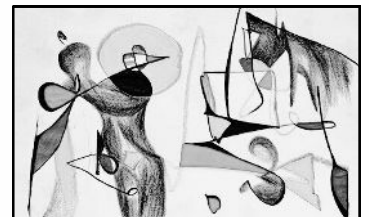
**Step 2 - Tune:** Rotate the paper 90 degrees, hold the pencil in your other hand, and play the piece of music in your head again. Respond to the tune with your pencil, draw with the melody and don't lift the pencil from the paper this time. Draw lightly and let the musical phrases build up layers of texture and depth.



**Step 3 - Words:** Rotate the paper 90 degrees again (it should now be upside down from where you started). Holding the pencil in your dominant hand again (this time in a usual writing grip), play the song again in your head, and now focus on the lyrics. Don't write the words, simply draw the shapes that come into your head when you hear them. If you're feeling brave, try this part with your eyes closed - it really helps to free the hand and gain expression.



**Step 4 - Finishing Touches:** Look at the drawing from various angles, looking for interesting areas. If you feel the drawing requires it, maybe add accents, shading, or even colour. You can also remove bits with an eraser to accentuate important areas.



And there you have it! My attempt here was to the song 'Blood of Eden' by Peter Gabriel.

**Further Experimentation:** These drawing techniques can also be applied to landscapes - think of a favourite place you have visited and break the drawing down into three activities - recalling your mood at the time (rhythm), what you did there (tune), and who was there with you (words).

You don't need to send your responses to these tasks to us at Koestler, we just hope you'll enjoy giving them a go. If you do we'll be very happy to see them but please note they won't be entered into this year's Koestler Awards and we won't be able to return them to you.