

2022 – 2023

Koestler Arts Annual Review



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Yacht on Causeway, HM Prison Whatton, Painting, 2022

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Coming out of custody is difficult. Sometimes you walk around with a sense that you have the word 'CRIMINAL' glowing in neon light on your back. Following my two years in custody, and winning a Platinum Koestler Award for my stage play *Opening Doors?*, I was proud to be selected by Koestler Arts to participate in the Mentoring Scheme and to meet my wonderfully inspiring mentor, Natasha.

One of the most wonderful things about Natasha was that there was absolutely no judgement. This, accompanied by sheer encouragement towards turning all negative anger and frustration into positivity through the medium of art, not only filled me with confidence, but led me to the fantastic achievement of publishing my own book.

It is often hard to find positives about an experience with the criminal justice system, but my mentor, Natasha, and Koestler Arts has certainly been the most positive thing about my last few years.

– Lee, Koestler Awards entrant, mentee and writer

In 2022, when I stepped into the role of Chair of Trustees at Koestler Arts, more than half of people in prisons in the UK were spending two hours or less out of their cell on an average day. This limited access to resources falls far short of the environment or support that any of us would need to make good decisions or to take steps to improve our lives.

We know that purposeful activity is key to navigating a prison sentence. In 2022, 89% of our entrants said that taking part in the Koestler Awards helped to build their self-confidence. This potential for positive change is why it's so important that we widen the scope and reach of our work.

So, it was fitting that our 60th Anniversary exhibition was our biggest show to date. *Freedom*, curated by Ai Weiwei, allowed almost 2000 artists in the criminal justice system to have their work displayed in the Southbank Centre. Tens of thousands of people came to see it. The impact of this cannot be overstated; it gave artists the chance to receive valuable encouragement, and allowed the public a glimpse into the deep well of creative talent within our criminal justice system.

On behalf of the Trustees, I'd like to extend my thanks to the Koestler Arts staff, volunteers and supporters for their dedication to improving the lives of thousands of people in the criminal justice system. I must make special mention of our outgoing chair, Dame Anne Owers and outgoing CEO Sally Taylor. Everyone at Koestler Arts is deeply grateful to both of them. It has been a pleasure to welcome Fiona Curran to the role of CEO. I look forward to a new chapter in the Koestler Arts story. We will continue to inspire creativity and create opportunities for people in detention who are looking for value, hope and purpose.

– Sir Richard Heaton KCB, Chair of Trustees

Cover Artwork: *Marshmallow Sunset*,
HM Prison & Young Offender
Institution Grampian, Painting, 2023

Designed by: Jennifer McGowan

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Koestler Awards 2022

Belle the Cat, Atkinson Secure Children's Home, Outstanding Debut Award and Fast Feedback Highly Commended Award for Painting, 2023



Over the past 60 years, the Koestler Awards have inspired more than 100,000 prisoners, secure hospital patients and immigration detainees to find purpose and confidence through the arts. The first annual Koestler Awards attracted 200 submissions; in 2022, we received around 6,500 entries from 3,000 people across the UK. Whilst the scope of our work has expanded, the Koestler Awards, and the spirit in which they were created, remain at the core of everything we do.

In recent years, cuts to prison services, rising populations, and Covid-19 restrictions, which saw libraries and learning facilities shut between 2020-22, have made access to purposeful activity increasingly difficult. In order to ensure that no-one felt excluded from the 2022 Koestler Awards, we made changes to how we inspired people to participate; how we motivated entrants to stay engaged; and how we fostered stronger relationships between people in secure settings and the wider public.

The 2022 Koestler Awards saw a 20% increase in the number of men, women and young people entering artwork. There was a 4% increase in the volume of visual art, music and writing entered into the Awards and a 5% increase in the number of establishments represented. This is a real achievement at a time when Covid-19 restrictions were still in place across the criminal justice system and testament to the resilience and creativity of our entrants and the staff that support them.

Entrants to the 2022 Koestler Awards



89%

reported increased self-confidence



89%

reported improved achievement in art



63%

reported improved achievement in education



61%

reported improved relationships with family & friends



61%

reported improved relationships with officers & staff



52%

reported improved ability to keep free from crime

Koestler Awards Steps

Jan – Apr

Artwork received

Apr – Jul

Entries logged onto our database

Jun – Jul

Judging

Jul – Aug

Feedback writing

End of Aug

Awards announced

Oct

Certificates and prize money sent to the artists

Oct – Dec

UK exhibition

Jan – Feb

Artwork sales money sent to the artists

Jan – Jun

Regional exhibitions

Jan – March

Artwork returned to the artists

“It feels like one of the great achievements [...] from my prison experience. This is a positive taken from a very negative scenario. To produce artwork and then to have it chosen for display is something I would never have achieved in my life before custody.”

– 2022 Koestler Awards entrant

Exhibitions

Freedom

Our 60th anniversary national exhibition was curated by artist and activist Ai Weiwei and seen by over 17,500 visitors from October to December.

The exhibition was unprecedented in its scale, showcasing ten times more work by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system than ever before: 1,858 creative works by 1,915

men, women, and young people in secure settings, and under supervision in the community around the UK.

Freedom featured daily tours by 7 ex-prisoner exhibition hosts, employed by Koestler Arts and trained to guide visitors around the show, as well as opportunities for visitors to buy over 1,000 pieces of original artwork.

We were delighted that 2 Hosts subsequently secured employment at the Southbank Centre as Visitor Assistants.

“It feels magical when a piece I’ve created speaks to another person.”

– 2022 Koestler Awards entrant



Ai Weiwei at the 2022 UK exhibition, *Freedom*, at the Southbank Centre

Exhibitions Around the UK

For the month of March **Changing Perceptions** was open and free to the public at Newcastle Cathedral. The exhibition was organised by the Oswin Project, a charity supporting prison-leavers in the Northeast of England, and showcased 15 Koestler Awards artworks alongside work from the Burnbake Trust, HM Prison Low Newton and HM Prison Northumberland.

Summer 2022 saw the return of Koestler Arts to the Supreme Court in London with **The Future is Never Too Big**, a public display of artwork by under 18s in secure settings or under supervision with a youth offending team which ran until the autumn. There were 29 pieces on display, including poetry, photography, woodwork, drawing, spray paint and collage.

Our World, held at Tramway in Glasgow in January 2023 was the first Koestler Arts exhibition we have been able to hold in Scotland since 2017. To select work for this show, we partnered with Fife College learners at HM Prison Shotts. Over two curation sessions, the group worked together to draw out individual stories and collective concerns to shape the exhibition.

On My Plate was an exhibition of artwork by women in the criminal justice system, created in partnership with the Doing Porridge project at the University of Surrey, a large sociological study putting a spotlight on women's experiences of food across four UK prisons. The show was full of vibrant creations revealing the many memories and meanings that food can hold.

“It feels so special to know that my family are able to see my artwork and I am able to talk about it with them. They always feel welcomed and love coming to the exhibitions.”

– 2022 Koestler Awards entrant



On My Plate at the University of Surrey



Matchstick Tower of Affirmations, HM Prison Littlehey, Bronze Award for Matchstick Model, 2022

Projects & Events

Our popular annual event **Voices from Prison** at the Southbank Centre sold out in record time in 2022 – a full five weeks ahead of the event.

The evening, organised as part of the London Literature Festival, gave voice to poetry and spoken word entries submitted to the Koestler Awards, read live by 9 performers with their own

experiences of the criminal justice system.

Returning for the first time since the pandemic, **Postcards from Prison** brought together more than 150 postcard-sized artworks for a display and lottery event at The Art Workers' Guild in London,

The event gave artists in prisons across the UK the chance to have their work displayed alongside major British artists, including Grayson Perry, Maggi Hambling, Billy Childish, Jeremy Deller and Vanessa Jackson RA, whilst also raising funds to support even more artists in secure settings.



“The night of the event I was so apprehensive [but] after the first few lines I got into it and the response has been fantastic. I’ve had nothing but positive feedback and encouragement and now cannot wait to do my next speaking event.”

– Chris, Koestler Arts Mentee and 2022 *Voices from Prison* performer

Outreach

Feedback Days

In 2022, the Outreach team piloted In-Person **Feedback Days**. This pilot saw artists and writers with experience of the value of arts in secure settings join learners at three establishments to lead live feedback sessions: HMP Stafford, HMP & YOI Stoke Heath and St Andrew's Healthcare Birmingham. 28 prisoners and secure patients participated in the sessions, each sharing their own artworks for discussion, and feeding back their thoughts and feelings on the artwork of their peers.



Artists Gary Mansfield and Wilfrid Wood on their way to HM Prison Stafford for a feedback day

"I only wish we had longer as the session time went so quickly. I am motivated more than ever to carry on writing."

– Feedback day participant

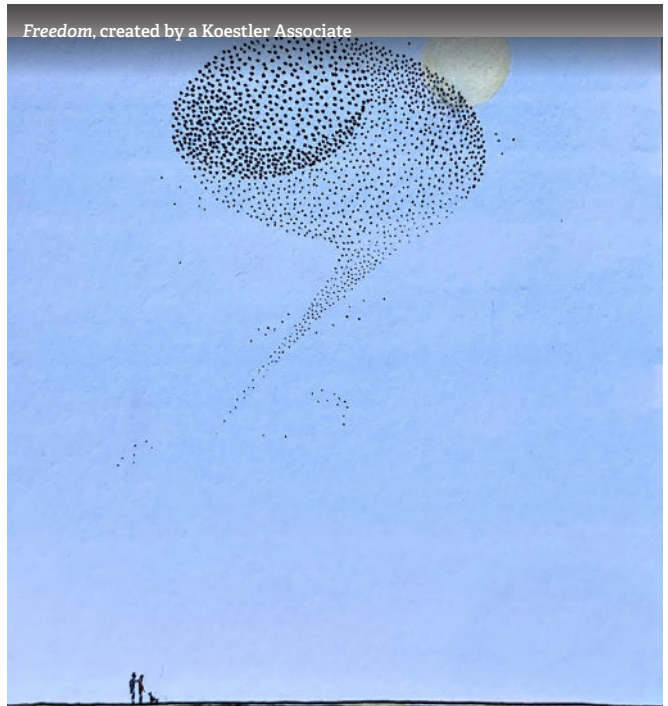
"The future will not be easy. But I hope that my art will rise like the phoenix."

– 2023 Koestler Awards entrant

Associates Programme

Koestler Associates receive regular newsletters with information about events and exhibitions; interviews with Koestler Awards judges; creative activities to inspire new artwork; and exclusive invitations to participate in commissions and activities. In 2022, Koestler Associates were given the chance to design and create greetings cards for Koestler Arts supporters, and also helped select the Themed Category for the 2023 Koestler Awards.

Freedom, created by a Koestler Associate



Induction Packs

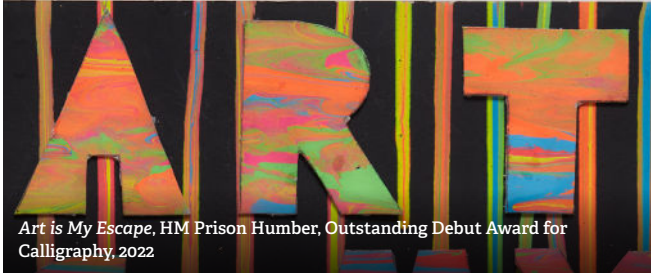
To inspire as many people as possible to take part in the Koestler Awards last year, we created the Koestler Arts Induction Wing Booklet filled with 14 different in-cell creative activities to be given to people on entering prison. 2,430 booklets were distributed to the induction wings of 7 establishments across the country.

We also commissioned 12 alumni of the Koestler Awards from a diverse range of backgrounds to create Art Aid activity resources. Five of the commissioned artists identified as female, and three identified as having a Black, Asian, or other minority ethnic background. Two Art Aid sheets were produced by former entrants under 25, with one young person contributing who was aged just 16.

Art Tutor Seminar

We welcomed 55 staff members from secure settings around the country to our 2022 Arts Tutor Seminar, nearly double the number that were able to attend in person in 2021.

The seminar allowed teaching staff who often work in isolation from each other to share experiences and best practice, as well as feedback on areas where Koestler Arts could grow to offer greater impact in the criminal justice system.



Art is My Escape, HM Prison Humber, Outstanding Debut Award for Calligraphy, 2022



Memories, HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Moorland, Sculpture, 2023

Family Days

2022 was the first time since Covid that we were able to offer our Family Days again at our national exhibition. Over 7 days, 273 friends and family members of exhibited artists joined the Koestler Arts Outreach Team, and exhibition hosts with their own lived experience of the criminal justice system, for an afternoon of tours, refreshments, and the chance to have their photograph taken with their loved one's artwork.

26 guests in total came to Family Days at the exhibitions in Bracknell and Glasgow, including several of the artists with work on display. For these events, we were able to offer everyone a reimbursement for their travel to and from the venues, ensuring as many friends, relatives, and artists could see and celebrate their achievements together.

"It means the world to me knowing that my friends and family have seen my work on display in an exhibition."

– Freedom exhibited artist

Mentoring & Scholarships

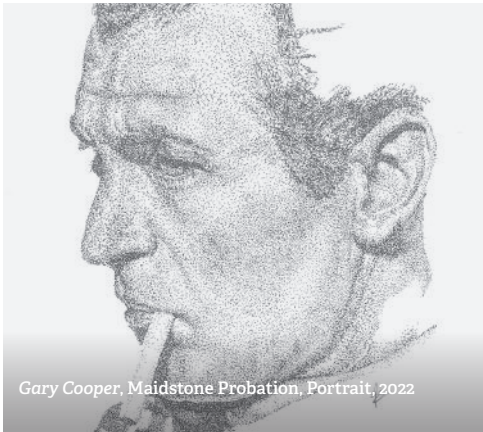
Our Mentoring and Scholarships scheme helps further the transformative power of the arts, and provides opportunity, access, and growth in individual lives post release.

Over the course of a year, Koestler Arts mentees receive bespoke one-to-one assistance from a specialist in their chosen artform. We were pleased to be able to put in-person sessions back in place, following the pandemic. At the end of March

2023, 15 mentoring relationships were being supported through the scheme, with referrals from probation services increasing.

We continue to commission and pay mentees to produce monthly Art Aid activity resources, and have also been able to offer additional, paid commissions to mentees including the production of unique artworks and paid speaking opportunities.

As an Official Charity Partner of The Affordable Art Fair, Koestler Arts was able to give mentees the opportunity to exhibit and sell their artwork there as part of the Hampstead fair in spring 2023.



Gary Cooper, Maidstone Probation, Portrait, 2022



Concrete, Bournemouth Probation, Sculpture, 2022

“My mentor has helped me find my voice and encouraged me to push outside my comfort zone.”

– Koestler Arts mentee, 2022

Financial Review

The impact and wide scope of our programmes is thanks to the individuals, trusts and corporate partners who have continued to show their support for arts in secure settings throughout the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. This has enabled our programmes to grow both in scale and impact, helping us to securely plan for the future and to continue supporting some of the country's most disadvantaged and marginalised people.

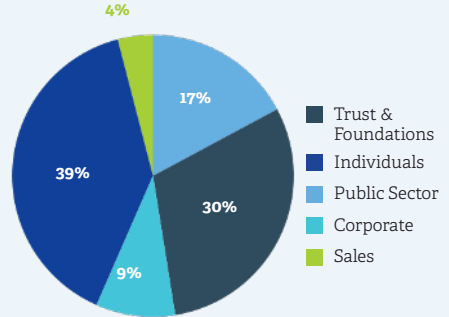
Koestler Arts is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, and receives support for core programming from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Koestler Arts would like to thank Bromley Trust, CCLA, Creative Scotland, Elysium Healthcare, Maingot Charitable Trust, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, Serco, Sodexo Justice Services, The Evan Cornish Foundation and William Arthur Rudd Charitable Trust, for their invaluable support. This financial year, we have also been fortunate to receive legacy gifts and anonymous donations, for which we are immensely grateful.

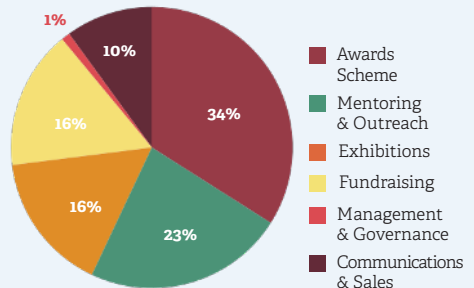
	Income*	Expenditure
22-23	946,446	995,933
21-22	847,489	882,024

*income raised against the ongoing capital campaign has not been included in the stated income figures

Income 22 – 23



Expenditure 22 – 23



“Thank you to everyone who supported our programmes in 22/23, as well as everyone who contributed to the new arts centre, which represents a new chapter in our long history.”

- Fiona Curran, Koestler Arts CEO

Operations

Throughout 2022 we continued to make progress towards building the new Koestler Arts Centre. We want to thank all the funders and donors who made possible this ambition to increase our organisational efficiency and reduce our environmental impact, as well as providing us with all the benefits of a fully accessible and public-facing building. We are excited to explore local partnerships and to share our

new facilities with supporters and the public soon.

To coincide with our new premises, in 2022 we also redeveloped our website to make it more accessible.

Finally, 2022 and 2023 saw several changes to the Koestler Arts Board and management team. Among these, in December 2022, Sir Richard Heaton KCB took over from

Dame Anne Owers as Chair of Trustees and Jasmin Booth took over as Treasurer from Jane Gillespie. In March 2023 our CEO Sally Taylor retired after nearly 8 years in post, with our former Director of Arts, Fiona Curran, stepping into the position after an external recruitment process. Our new Development Director, Stephanie Weber, joined the management team in August 2023.



The new Koestler Arts Centre

Koestler Arts was delighted to be awarded the 2022 Longford Prize for our work making 'a vital human connection' between people in prisons and the wider public. We were also shortlisted for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 2022 Award for Civic Arts Organisations, in recognition of the adaptations we made throughout the pandemic to ensure people in secure settings felt supported.

Having successfully navigated the turbulence of the past few years, we are now facing the cost of living crisis. We are pleased to have been able to offer pay increases to staff on the lowest salaries and will continue revisiting salaries against our budgets. We also offered Access Stipends to our Awards judges, to ensure a diverse range of people could volunteer.

Equality and Diversity remains a standing item on our Board agendas, with staff and stakeholder focus groups continuing to explore how we can remove the barriers people face in accessing our work.



“Being creative is a way to focus on what is beyond the bars, to forget about the physical constraints of prison and let your imagination take you places where you are free.”

– 2022 Koestler Awards entrant



Preparing work for the 2022 UK exhibition at the Southbank Centre



“We all need a purpose. We all need something to look forward to. And we all need to feel that we deserve a future. This is where Koestler Arts entered my life.”

– 2022 Koestler Awards entrant

