



Koestler Arts produce monthly Art Aid sheets featuring creative tasks that can be done in cell and with just paper and a pencil. New Art Aid sheets are available from the first Monday of every month. This sheet has been made with support from The Arts Society Northleach.

Although the 2024 Koestler Awards deadline passed on 12 April, we hope these sheets will inspire you to remain creative and perhaps try something new.

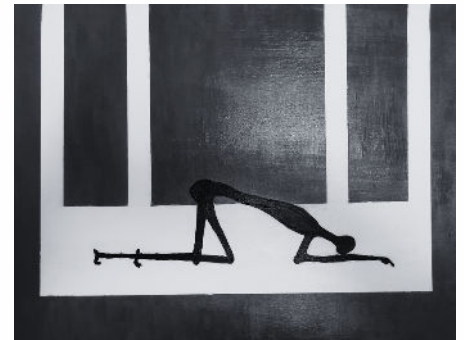
MAY 2024

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 Osman.

My Story

During covid some prisoners were kept in their cells almost all day. It was really tough. I found comfort in art and drawing became my way out of those tough times. I was given a pencil and some paper to draw simple things like lemons and bottles, and that's when I started drawing.

My art teacher noticed my talent and encouraged me to keep going. He helped me to understand the scale and composition of an image and to improve my drawings and portraits. I read a lot of books about drawing and artists. I stayed up all night drawing, unable to sleep because of insomnia. Since I didn't have any pictures of things I loved, I drew them from memory, including pictures of friends, my dog, etc.



Fallen Man

Surprisingly my artwork got noticed outside of prison by Koestler Arts and one of my drawings was selected for their exhibition. It was a drawing of a bottle of wine and piece of cheese, and people said they could almost smell the cheese! The funny thing was I had done the drawing in just 15 minutes.

When I got out of prison I found a mentor through Koestler Arts who has helped me understand modern art. I have just started a college course on abstract painting to learn more and improve my self-taught skills. My probation officer helped me to secure funding for the course.

Now I am working hard. I hope to be successful one day and inspire others to believe in themselves no matter how tough things get.

My Task: Animalistic

When I met my Koestler mentor for the first time, he asked me to draw the first thing that came to mind. I had a very clear image in my head of a demonic bull charging, and sketched it out in pencil. My mentor asked if the bull represented me, and asked me to think more about the idea.

I researched bulls and their meaning in different cultures, and explored the idea of what the image represented further. I produced different versions of the bull drawing, and in the end came up with a charcoal version. I came to feel that the bull didn't represent me but rather the situation I was in - the system charging towards me and not stopping, and the feeling that I was fighting against it.



My task for you is to draw an animal that represents either you or the circumstances you find yourself in. You can start with pencil and paper but may want to add other materials to create movement or more detail if you have them. Think about the attributes you or your circumstances share with particular animals and how you can represent this in the animal you choose, their stance, expression, surroundings, and so on. You might want to draw a few versions of your animal like I did, until you feel your drawing captures the attributes or feelings you are aiming to represent.

With some practice you will be amazed to see how good your work gets. In prison a good portrait of someone's family will help you earn a few cakes or tuna cans, and who doesn't want that. Enjoy!

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.