

KOESTLER ASSOCIATES NEWSLETTER WINTER 2019



Season's Greetings from Koestler Arts!

As the Koestler Awards year draws to an end, we are looking back over some of the exciting events and projects that have taken place over the last few months and looking forward to another year of talent and creativity in 2020! We hope you enjoy reading our final 2019 Koestler Associates newsletter.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

We loved seeing all the fantastic entries to our Associates Christmas Card Competition in 2018. Unfortunately we haven't been able to run the competition again this year, but have enclosed with this newsletter blank Koestler cards you might like to decorate and send to loved ones to share your creativity along with your festive wishes!

IN THE NEW YEAR

We'll be sending entry forms and guidance notes explaining how to enter the 2020 Koestler Awards to Education Departments and directly to Associates in January, so keep an eye out for these!

We can't wait to see more of your fantastic entries in 2020 and hope you'll continue to help spread the word about the Awards where you are by displaying our posters and encouraging others to enter in the new year.

If you have any queries you can as always:

- **write to us for free at:** FREEPOST Koestler Arts
- **email:** info@koestlerarts.org.uk
- **call:** 020 8740 0333

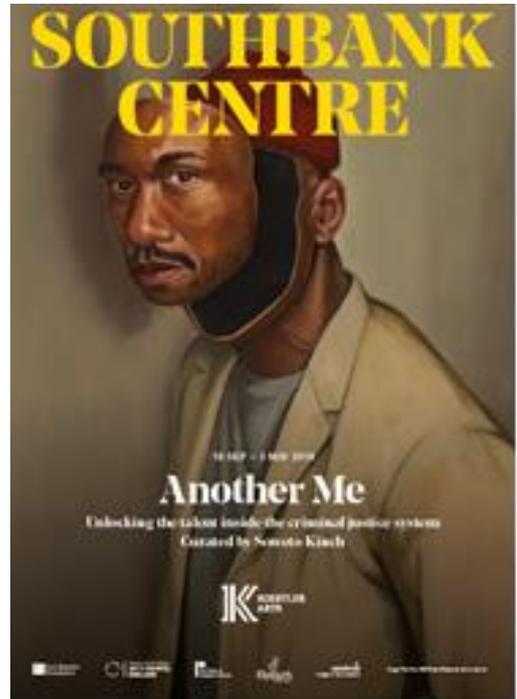
ANOTHER ME EXHIBITION

Southbank Centre, 19 September - 03 November 2019

Another Me was the 2019 Koestler National Exhibition at Southbank Centre, curated by award-winning musician Soweto Kinch, one of the most exciting and versatile musicians in both the British jazz and hip-hop scenes.

There were over 150 artworks on display, from music and poetry to paintings, drawings and sculpture. The title for the exhibition invited visitors to reassess their perceptions of people who have spent time inside.

Soweto Kinch curated the exhibition to take visitors through three themes, each named after one of the artworks in that section of the show. Each theme was accompanied by a soundscape, written and recorded by Soweto and played out loud in the space, guiding the viewers' journey through the exhibition.



Stained Glass Superman drew together works that dealt with superheroes and masks and a 'project[ed] a sense of self that's supernatural' (Soweto Kinch). This section explored the outward identities we adopt or hide behind.

Disco Dogs invited the audience to consider works that dealt largely with animals and nature and how these might reflect the artists themselves. 'It's interesting to see what a fantastical jungle has to say about the real concrete jungles that a lot of [the exhibited artists] are placed in.' (Soweto Kinch)



The final section, *That Was Then, This Is Now*, exhibited a number of works that dealt more directly and honestly with the artists' identities. It included a wall of poetry and booklets of writing for the audience to read and contemplate.

Audience Choice Awards

Visitors completed feedback cards to vote for their favourite exhibited artworks and comment on what they liked about the pieces. 7,853 feedback cards were completed - over 50% more than last year! - and will be sent directly to the artists. The four pieces with the most feedback won our Audience Choice Awards:



Consequences

HM Prison Warren Hill

Victor Roberts Highly Commended Award for Painting
Audience Choice Bronze Award



Stories, Socks & Jay Cloths

HM Prison Low Newton

John Crockett Highly Commended Award for
Themed Category: Interlude
Audience Choice Silver Award



Holloway Women's Building Game

Camden and Islington Probation Service

Zelga & Stuart Miller Platinum Award for Graphic Novel
Audience Choice Gold Award



Untitled 1-5

HM Prison Guernsey

Margaret Macdonald Platinum
Award for Photography

Audience Choice Platinum Award



'Amazing technique and lighting. Full of life. In stark contrast to the lines in the background. Keep on clicking!'
(visitor feedback)

Exhibition Hosts

Since 2013 we have trained and employed people with lived experience of the criminal justice system to work at our annual National Exhibition as Exhibition Hosts. Hosts take members of the public on daily tours of the exhibition, run our pop-up shop, and invigilate the exhibition space. Hosts bring the exhibition to life for our visitors and the role can have a huge impact on those we employ.

We were delighted to run this project again for *Another Me*. Our six Exhibition Hosts did a fantastic job welcoming thousands of visitors and sharing insights into the exhibited artwork and the experience of making art in secure settings. Jane, one of this year's Hosts, writes about her experience in the role:

'I returned to the UK this year after spending 3 ½ years in an Indian prison. I was fragile, broken, and completely lost. I didn't know what to do or whether I could do anything at all, and I was sure nobody would employ me. I was encouraged by Prisoners Abroad to apply to be a Koestler Exhibition Host, and to my complete surprise I was offered the job. I was being given a chance.

I understood on a personal level Koestler's aim to encourage people in secure settings to lead more positive lives by participating in the arts - being creative had kept me going whilst in prison; it helped me make friends, pass the time, and make sense of my situation.

I was so honoured to be a part of *Another Me*; talking to visitors about the amazing works and my prison experiences has been incredible. I now know I am more than the time I spent in prison; I have skills and experience to offer. I've grown in confidence, applied for and been offered jobs, and been motivated to finish the book I started writing in prison. Most importantly I now feel I can stand proud. My 17 year old daughter was 12 when I was arrested, and yesterday I met with her for only the second time in three years. When telling her about the exhibition, Koestler Arts, and my plans for the future, she looked at me and said "Mum, I'm really proud of you".

I want to thank all the wonderful people at Koestler Arts who have guided, encouraged and coaxed the best out of me so that I could bring the best out of the amazing exhibition *Another Me*. Without your support, I wouldn't be in the good place that I am today.'

EVENTS

We held a series of events alongside *Another Me*, showcasing some of the writing, music and performance talent in the criminal justice system.

Voices From Prison

As part of the London Literature Festival we host an annual evening of poetry and spoken word performances by Koestler Awards entrants. This year the event was hosted by spoken word artist and Koestler Awards judge Wanda Canton.

A number of the poems performed feature in the second volume of our poetry anthology *Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons*. This volume features poems from the 2018 and 2019 Koestler Awards and is available to read in prison libraries and to buy on our online shop: <https://www.koestlerarts.org.uk/shop/>

Donna, who is a Koestler entrant published in the anthology and alumni of our Mentoring Scheme, writes about her experience performing at *Voices From Prison* for the second time:

'I was fortunate enough to be invited to read again at this year's *Voices From Prison* and it was brilliant. The evening was presented by the fabulously talented Wanda Canton, whose vibrant energy was contagious and entertaining. She interspersed the readings with some of her own incredible poetry, and some from others who couldn't be there, making the whole event more enjoyable.

There were four other amazing writers performing who, with their unique styles, used honesty, humour, anger and love to lead us through a myriad of emotions with their poetry and prose.

The support of the audience was obvious by the applause and appreciation shown and I genuinely felt that every single person there believed in the work Koestler Arts does. I caught up with two poets who I had met at last year's event and it was great to see where their lives had taken them.

The Koestler team were supportive throughout the whole event and both they and many of the audience members came up to congratulate us on how great we had all been. I loved every moment.'



Koestler Curates

Koestler Curates saw us host two free Friday lunchtime concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre:

The first concert featured The Pinnacle - the fourth band formed on the Irene Taylor Trust's Sounding Out programme - playing original material in their debut performance.

The second saw The Liberty Choir - a community choir made up of people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and people without - perform a medley of popular songs. The choir runs programmes in prisons, engaging prisoners in the power of singing together.

Voices Out Loud

Actors from Synergy Theatre Project, with lived experience of the criminal justice system, performed texts by Koestler Awards entrants in the Royal Festival Hall on two weekend dates in October.

You can watch some of the performances on our website:

<https://www.koestlerarts.org.uk/exhibitions/events/past-events/#voices-out-loud>

Synergy Performances at the Royal Court Theatre

Through Koestler's partnership with Synergy Theatre Project - a theatre company working with people in the criminal justice system - extracts from the three top Award winning plays to Koestler's 2019 Stage Play category were performed at the Royal Court Theatre in London. It was incredible to see some of our Koestler writing entries come to life on such a prestigious stage!

EFG London Jazz Festival Concert at HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs

This November, Koestler Arts teamed up with Serious - producers of live jazz and contemporary music events - for a unique concert in the atmospheric prison chapel of HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs. This marked the first time that a London Jazz Festival event has taken place inside a prison.

Grammy Award winning musician Rhiannon Giddens headlined the event alongside Francesco Turrisi, supported by an ensemble of prisoners performing original vocal material written over the course of 8 workshop sessions in the prison with visiting workshop leaders.

'Their songs are unflinching and honest with a rare authenticity that redefines what it is to be free. It's been an honour to nurture their talent and I hope they go on doing it.' (workshop leader)

OTHER NEWS

Surveys

Huge thanks to everyone who completed the surveys sent out in the last Associates newsletter! We have also been collecting feedback in a series of discussion forums in prisons and with people with experience of prison who are now back in the community. We've had lots of really thoughtful and insightful contributions and will endeavour to keep everyone updated with how these feed into our work.

A couple of small changes that we are already putting in place are: we are working on simplifying our entry forms, and announcing our Themed Category as early as possible...

Themed Category

We are excited to announce our Themed Category for the 2020 Koestler Awards will be...

'Window'

Work made in any artform - visual, written or performed - can be entered into this category. We are always thrilled to see the huge range of work this category inspires, and the various ways our themes are interpreted by different artists. We are interested in personal interpretations of the word and what it means to you, however abstract. We can't wait to see what you come up with!

Below you'll find some examples of previous Koestler Awards entries that suggested this theme to us. Hopefully they will spark some inspiration!

But remember! ...As always, our Themed Category is just one of 52 categories - the others all being different artforms such as sculpture, poetry collection, and choral music, to which you can enter work on any subject or theme. Full guidance notes on how to enter the 2020 Awards will be sent out in the new year.

