

2020 Awards

Timeline

As you'll know, we extended our 2020 Awards deadline from April to July, to make time for as many entrants as possible to get their work to us in spite of the Coronavirus lockdown. As a result our other Awards processes - logging work, judging, writing feedback, preparing certificates - are all happening a little later than usual this year.

Here are the key dates for the rest of the 2020 Awards cycle:

30th October 2020: Awards results announced on Koestler Arts website
30th November 2020: Certificates, Feedback and Awards cheques sent to entrants
31st January 2021: Sales cheques sent to entrants
31st March 2021: All unsold visual artwork returned to entrants

Judging

Judging of the 2020 Awards is underway! Government restrictions mean judging looks a little different this year - we're inviting (masked!) judges in to the Koestler house one category at a time, where we'd often have two or three categories being judged on the same day otherwise, more work has been posted to judges who are not able to come in to our offices than usual, and some categories have even been judged over video call on Zoom!



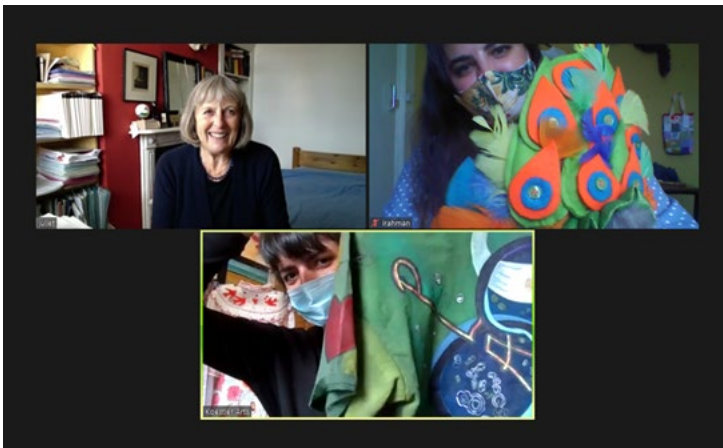
Sculpture judge Wilfred Wood admiring an entry.

His advice to entrants: "Be your own unique, quirky, idiosyncratic self."



Photography judge Robert Taylor writing Feedback to entrants.

"I want in the feedback slips to make suggestions of how a successful image could be even better."



Juliet Ash judging Fashion entries over Zoom, with the help of Koestler staff.

Juliet was particularly impressed with entrants' resourcefulness this year: "There were three or four that were constructing garments out of milk cartons, water bottles, etc. but also using pencils instead of knitting needles and the key of a corned beef tin for a needle! A lot of improvisation going on...it was very refreshing."



Spoken Word judge Wanda Canton.

"I think with spoken word and music there's an element of vulnerability and it's an honour to hear people talking about their experiences. It always stands out if somebody is saying something very personal or authentic...something that's original, or something that's maybe very stylistic or personable. And to be honest all of the entries are, because nobody writes the same way, nobody speaks the same way, and that's what I love about spoken word - it's always unique."

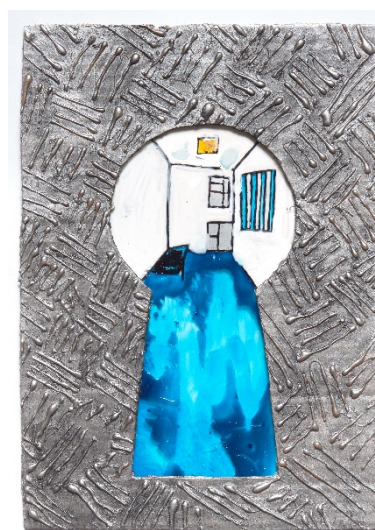
No Lockdown in the Imagination

Government restrictions mean our annual exhibition of Koestler Awards entries at London's Southbank Centre will be different this year, but we are delighted to still be able to showcase some of the important and inspiring Koestler entries there this autumn.

From **12th November - 13th December**, the outdoor spaces of the Southbank Centre will host an installation of a selection of artworks entered into the 2020 Koestler Awards. The showcase, titled 'No Lockdown in the Imagination', will reflect the challenges faced within the criminal justice system this year, entrants' imaginative use of limited resources, and the power of creativity in difficult times.

"[Lockdown] has given me more opportunity to fill the long hours - doing something meaningful and I find my own release and 'freedom' in the process of expression."

- 2020 Koestler Awards entrant



Through the Keyhole, HM Prison Kilmarnock, Mixed Media, 2020

2021 Awards

2021 Themed Category

We are excited to announce our Themed Category for the 2021 Koestler Awards will be...

'Together'

We asked Koestler mentees for their suggestions this year, and 'Together' was the most popular choice! 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 the category inspires, and the various ways our themes are interpreted by different entrants. 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!

But remember! ...As always, our Themed Category will be just one of 52 categories - the others all being different artforms such as sculpture, life story, and spoken word, to which you can enter work on any subject or theme. Full guidance notes on how to enter the 2021 Awards will be sent out in the new year.

2021 Awards Timeline

We're planning to be back to our usual timeline for the 2021 Awards. The key dates to remember are:

January 2021: Entry forms and guidance notes sent to establishments and Associates

22nd April 2021: Deadline for 2021 entries

More Ways to Get Involved

Koestler Associates

Since 2016, we have been inviting entrants who would like more regular communication from Koestler to sign up to be Associates. Associates receive regular newsletters (like this one!) with information about events and exhibitions, interviews with judges, and tips for creating new work.

Associates are also directly sent Awards entry forms and guidance notes, posters and flyers at the start of every year, as we ask that they help us spread the word about the Koestler Awards within their establishments. They might stick posters up around their wing or education department, encourage others to enter the Awards, or help someone fill in an entry form.

If you're not already and would like to become a Koestler Associate, write to us and let us know, and you'll be added to our mailing list and continue to receive newsletters like this one.

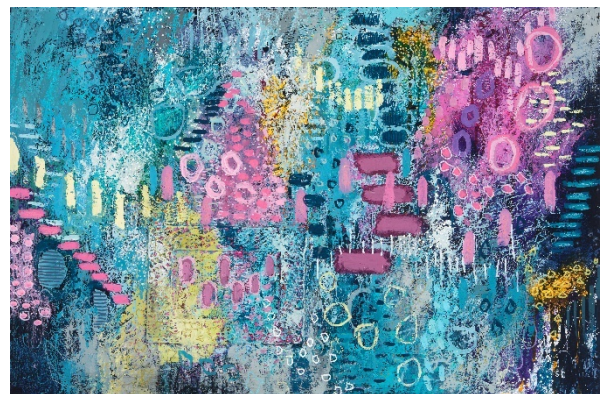
Art Aid

In response to the coronavirus lockdown, we created and shared weekly Art Aid activity sheets between April and the end of July 2020, with simple creative tasks that could be done in cell. We know how important creativity is to our entrants so we wanted to provide some inspiration in a very difficult time. After the 2020 Koestler Awards deadline we decided to continue producing Art Aid sheets on a monthly basis and began commissioning current and former Koestler mentees to create the content. Each month Art Aid sheets now share the stories of artists and writers with lived experience of the criminal justice system as well as creative tasks set by them. We have enclosed the latest Art Aid sheet with this newsletter. It features two thoughtful and thought-provoking letter writing tasks which we hope you will be inspired to try!

We will be sending out the latest Art Aid sheets with each Associates Mailout we do in the future, so please sign up to our Associates Scheme if you wish to receive them. To access the new Art Aid sheets each month please speak to a member of your education department - they can be downloaded from the Koestler Arts website from the first Monday of the month.

Arts Mentoring

For the past 13 years, we have run an Arts Mentoring Scheme at Koestler, alongside our Awards and other activities. We match each successful applicant with a relevant and experienced local arts professional, who we have specially trained as a Koestler Arts Mentor. Mentees and mentors then meet in the community 8-10 times over a 12 month period, where they work together to identify and work towards the mentee's goals. These might include applying to a course, building up a portfolio of work, or developing techniques.



I Found My Window, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire CRC - Huntingdon, Mixed Media, 2020

Additionally, mentees stay in regular contact with us at Koestler, and we are able to offer support and creative opportunities. You'll see in this newsletter we invited current mentees to decide the 2021 themed category, and we currently offer paid commission opportunities for mentees to create activities for our Art Aid sheets. In 2019 we held an exhibition of the work of past mentees, 'Our Journey', at the House of St Barnabas in London.

The mentoring scheme is aimed at individuals making the transition from custody to community, but we welcome applications at any stage and can keep them on file until close to an applicant's release. We have arts mentors across England and Wales with a range of interests and experience - including writers, visual artists, musicians, and craftspeople.

A leaflet with more information on the scheme and how to apply is enclosed with this newsletter. If you would be interested in applying, please write to us to let us know, and we will send you an application form to complete.

"When you come out of prison you are sure everybody knows it, like there's a sign above your head. Going into environments typically reserved for the middle and upper classes was a daunting prospect. My mentor helped me dissolve that idea and was a great influence and source of support."
- Former Koestler mentee

Research

Over the past year (2019-2020) Koestler Arts conducted some internal research to measure our impact and to gather ideas about how to meaningfully develop our work. We spoke to 225 people with lived experience of the criminal justice system in a series of 30 feedback groups across various prisons and community settings. We also received 458 responses to our surveys that were sent out to prisons, secure hospitals, young offender institutions, and immigration removal centres. We are enclosing with this newsletter an abridged version of our report that details some of the ways we will be using the feedback and suggestions we collected in our future work.

If you would like to read the full report, please contact Fina Schneider, FREEPOST KOESTLER ARTS, to request a copy.



Through the Window into the Art Room, Brook House Immigration Removal Centre, Painting, 2020

Reminder

Please remember to write and notify us of changes to your address and contact details, so we can ensure future Associates newsletters, certificates, feedback, Awards and sales money, and returned artwork reach you! You can always write to us for free at: FREEPOST KOESTLER ARTS.

Take care and stay safe
The Koestler Team