

“No Lockdown in the Imagination”

A KOESTLER ARTS INSTALLATION OF ARTWORKS FROM PRISONS

OUTDOORS AT LONDON'S SOUTHBANK CENTRE
12 NOVEMBER – 13 DECEMBER 2020



*No Lockdown in the Imagination*¹ is an outdoor installation taking place across the windows of London's Southbank Centre, and online at koestlerarts.org.uk from 12 November – 13 December 2020. On show will be a selection of audio, visual and written works selected from the 2020 Koestler Awards, the 58th annual Koestler Awards for people across the UK's criminal justice system.

This installation is a testament to the power of the arts against adversity. During the pandemic, many prisoners have been under 23-hour lockdown. Educational activities, family visits, and release on temporary license - to start to rebuild life in the outside world - were all put on hold to keep people safe. For prisoners, creativity has been their only escape and saviour.

Using limited materials and limitless creativity, people across our criminal justice system have kept themselves going with the power of their imagination. As a result, this installation has a joyful, optimistic feel. The work is reproduced on window vinyls, with a selection also displayed behind the glass at the Southbank Centre's Riverside Terrace. It is exactly the sort of escapism people need at this particular moment in history.

There is an unavoidable irony in the fact that the work, which was created *inside*, (coincidentally the name of the Koestler Arts 2017 exhibition, curated by Antony Gormley) will only be viewable from the outside.

Sally Taylor, Chief Executive, Koestler Arts said about the exhibition:

“We have all experienced lockdown this year, but the term originates in prisons, which have undergone their own very draconian form of lockdown, many for 23 hours a day. No

¹ The title for the Koestler Arts installation was inspired by Lemn Sissay MBE, whose blog entry on 3rd May 2020 read: *“The reason prisoners can create extraordinary art and poetry is because there is no lockdown in the imagination.”* <http://blog.lemnsissay.com/2020/05/03/may-was-to-be-the-most-exciting-month-of-my-career/#sthash.vo2qill0.CahBly2A.dpbs>

Lockdown in the Imagination reflects the art of experts in lockdown, received for our awards this year. We hope it resonates with and inspires its audiences.”

On the prison lockdown, a 2020 Koestler Awards entrant said:

“Prison is hard, but (..) with Covid-19, you couldn’t imagine in your wildest dreams what it is like for us. 23 hours locked in our little box since March. If you’re reading this, a little bit of advice. Never take your freedom for granted.”

Covid-19 has made 2020 the most challenging Koestler Awards year to date. Despite the backdrop of national, local and prison lockdowns, prisoners, secure patients, people on probation and youth offending teams still managed to submit over 6,500 entries.

The 2020 Koestler Awards have been judged by a socially-distanced judging panel. As in previous years, specialist judges selected winners and gave feedback across each of the 52 categories. The exhibition is curated separately, and includes many of the judges’ choices. This year’s Koestler Awards judging panel includes Sarah Lucas, Jeremy Deller, Alison Lapper, George the Poet, Dorcas Magbadelo, Hot Chip and many other established names across the fields of visual art, poetry and music.

No Lockdown in the Imagination celebrates this achievement and is a chance for their vibrant work to be shared with the general public. Many of the artworks in the installation will also be for sale, via the Koestler Arts website.

IMAGE: *Hope*, HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Low Newton

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Notes to editors:

For further information, images and press opportunities, please contact:

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Listings Information:

No Lockdown in the Imagination, a Koestler Arts outdoor installation of artworks from prisons

Dates: **12th November – 13th December 2020**

Address: **Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road London SE1 8XX**

Tickets: **Free** (un-ticketed)

koestlerarts.org.uk

About Koestler Arts

Koestler Arts is the new working name of Koestler Trust (as of 1st May 2019), a registered charity (1105759) and a company limited by guarantee (4961363). The charity was set up by the writer Arthur Koestler in 1962 to encourage participation in the arts by people in the criminal justice system and to share that talent and potential with the public. It is now one of the UK’s best-known prison arts charities, working across the whole of the British criminal justice system – in prisons, secure hospitals, immigration centres, young offender institutions and in the community. Their work harnesses the uniquely transformative power of the arts, encouraging the creative rehabilitative journeys of some of society’s most marginalised individuals.

Koestler Awards are simple and powerful. They motivate people across the whole of the British criminal justice system to participate in the arts, and to show the public their talent and contribution to society. Each year Koestler Arts receives thousands of entries from entrants across the UK in 52 categories. Entrants receive feedback and certificates, can be selected for public exhibitions or mentoring, and may sell their visual artwork. Koestler Arts holds a programme of exhibitions and events each year around the UK. The biggest is the annual exhibition at London's Southbank Centre, which c. 20,000 people visit.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre and one of the UK's top five visitor attractions, occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).