

Koestler Arts presents

## The I and the We

An exhibition curated by Camille Walala and Sarah Ihler-Meyer

29 October - 5 December 2021

Southbank Centre

Spirit Level Exhibition Space, Royal Festival Hall



Koestler Arts are proud to present their fourteenth annual London exhibition at the Southbank Centre this October. This year's edition, entitled *The I and the We* curated by Camille Walala and Sarah Ihler-Meyer, will take place from 29 October to 5 December 2021.

The exhibition will showcase artwork by people across the UK's criminal justice system which was entered into the 2021 Koestler Awards. The charity aims to help prisoners, secure patients and detainees lead more positive lives by supporting them to participate and achieve in the arts. Their exhibitions increase public awareness and understanding of art by people in the criminal justice system, ultimately reframing the way we see prisoners, and allowing them a creative voice in a system that can often be silencing.

This year's exhibition will be curated by French-born, London-based artist Camille Walala and her sister, curator Sarah Ihler-Meyer. Over the last decade, Walala's large-scale murals and installations have transformed public spaces globally. Koestler Arts invited the curators to utilise their unique perspective and creative eye in the curation of artwork made in the UK's criminal justice system. Together they selected over 200 pieces to display from more than 6,400 entries. Past curators have included [Antony Gormley](#), [Benjamin Zephaniah](#), Speech DeBelle, Sarah Lucas, Grayson Perry, the families of prisoners, victims of crime, serving female prisoners and graduates of the [Koestler Arts mentoring programme](#).

Walala and Ihler-Meyer's bright and bold exhibition design lights up the Royal Festival Hall's Spirit Level exhibition space with over 200 selected pieces in a variety of mediums across craft, fine art, music, animation and writing. The exhibition will be presented to the public by ex-prisoner exhibition hosts who have received specialist training to lead tours, answer questions and share their first-hand experience of the importance of art and creativity for those within the criminal justice system.

The exhibited artwork illuminates the amazing perseverance many within the criminal justice system have maintained during the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and with limited equipment and space to create. The unique and beautiful pieces, including sculptures carved from prison-issue soap, a dinosaur constructed from scrap paper, a tram and boat painstakingly produced from matchsticks, a painted collage composed of grains of rice and a portrait painted with coffee, are a testament to the ingenuity and commitment many have managed to bring to their creative practice. Overall, the exhibition demonstrates the depth and breadth of creative energy and talent among the communities of prisoners, secure patients and detainees, as well as people on community sentences across the UK.

*"In an environment which alternates between clinical brightness and a dreadful darkness, Koestler brings permission for colour, texture and light. Every prisoner should be given a brush and told to make a mark - perhaps then less would return"* comments a previously exhibited artist.

The show will also include writing from the third volume of *Koestler Voices*, a poetry anthology published by Koestler Arts. The book showcases insightful poetry written by those in criminal justice settings during the difficult past two years we have just faced, and features a foreword by poet Jackie Kay.

Camille Walala said: *"I was so grateful to see the amazing pieces from these artists. I found them all quite emotional and inspiring. All the ones we selected give us a strong feeling - these artworks will make you laugh, cry and smile, sometimes all at once."*

Sally Taylor, Chief Executive of Koestler Arts, comments: *"Koestler Arts is thrilled to be back once again at our usual venue at the Southbank Centre. We are delighted to be working with Camille Walala and Sarah Ihler-Meyer, and look forward very much once again to welcoming visitors with such a positive and eclectic display of inspirational work made for the most part during Lockdown."*

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### **The I and the We**

Spirit Level Exhibition Space, Royal Festival Hall  
Southbank Centre, London SE1 8XX

Nearest stations: Waterloo, Waterloo East, Charing Cross and Blackfriars

Opening Hours:

29 October - 5 December 2021

Mon - Wed 10am - 6pm, Thu - Sun 10am - 9pm

Free entry

For more information visit: [www.koestlerarts.org.uk](http://www.koestlerarts.org.uk)

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## **KOESTLER ARTS:**

Koestler Arts (formerly Koestler Trust) is the UK's best-known prison arts charity. Each year Koestler Arts encourages thousands of people within the criminal justice system to express themselves creatively, and learn new skills, by entering work into the annual Koestler Awards. The Awards celebrate great music, fine art, writing and design created in prisons, secure hospitals and on probation. Despite Covid-19, the 2020 Koestler Arts exhibition went ahead - presented as an outdoor installation for the first time. Socially-distanced 2020 and 2021 Koestler Awards judging also went ahead despite the pandemic, bringing encouragement and support to thousands wishing to change their lives through the arts.

The Koestler Awards are simple and powerful. They motivate people across the whole of the UK's 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, in 52 art 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 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).

Image: 21K5276, *Sitting Together*, HM Prison Bronzefield, Weavers' Company Platinum Award for Textile Art, wooden chairs and wool.