

**SOUTHBANK  
CENTRE**



**Jeremy Deller and John Costi announced as co-curators of 2024 prison art exhibition  
at the Southbank Centre**



Jeremy Deller (left) and John Costi (right). Images courtesy of the artists.

**Opening November 2024  
Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre**

Koestler Arts is proud to announce artists Jeremy Deller and John Costi as the co-curators of their seventeenth annual UK exhibition in partnership with the Southbank Centre. The show, taking place in the autumn, will display artwork by hundreds of individuals in prisons, secure mental health facilities, immigration removal centres, young offender institutions and on community sentences across the UK.

The co-curators will select from over 8,000 pieces of fine art, design, writing, and music from the 2024 Koestler Awards. Each year thousands of men, women and young people in custodial settings submit their artistic creations to the annual Awards scheme to receive feedback, cash prizes and the chance to be selected for exhibition.

Both artists have had long associations with Koestler Arts. Deller, who has been a supporter of the charity's work for many years, volunteers time each summer to judge the annual Koestler Awards and write feedback to entrants. In 2008, he was pivotal in helping secure the now-established partnership between Koestler Arts and the Southbank Centre.

Costi first learnt about Koestler Arts in 2008 whilst serving a sentence at HM Young Offender Institution Feltham. Upon release, he joined the Koestler Arts Mentoring Scheme to help progress his artistic ambitions, going on to study at Central St Martins. Most recently, he was invited to perform readings of his poetry at Koestler Arts' *Voices from Prison* event at the Southbank Centre.

This is not the first time Deller and Costi have crossed paths. At Deller's *English Magic* exhibition for the British Pavilion at the 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia in 2013, he included artwork by British prisoners. He worked with the British Council to issue six Cultural Scholarships for artists with lived experience of prison to be

able to travel and visit the display in Venice. Costi, through his association with Koestler Arts, was one of the artists selected.

In Venice, the pair developed a rapport talking about their work and shared collaborative approach to art. That connection was later strengthened when they were both invited to record Koestler Arts' Radio 4 appeal in 2019.

The artists' initial conversations about joint curation have focused on how best to weave a collaborative aspect into the project. They are both keen to create a fuller picture of the broad work Koestler Arts does, and to use the opportunity to explore the relationship between the Koestler Awards scheme and the annual exhibition at the Southbank Centre that springs from it.

Jeremy Deller comments:

"I'm very happy to be selecting this year's Koestler Arts exhibition with John. Art rooms in secure settings are possibly the only place of calm and reflection that people in the criminal justice system will have - anything that supports this can only be a good thing."

John Costi comments:

"Koestler has played a pivotal role in my life. Starting as entrant, then awardee, mentee, scholar, arts worker, judge and now curator is a massive achievement and full circle moment for me. It is also an honour to be paired with Jeremy for this project. A great British artist, he has guided me on my artistic journey since we met in Venice all them years ago."

Fiona Curran, Chief Executive of Koestler Arts, comments:

"Jeremy and John have been involved with the charity for many years and understand the importance of championing creativity in secure settings, so this is a very exciting opportunity to see them working together towards a unique vision for this year's exhibition. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of their collaboration this autumn."

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, comments:

"We're delighted that such a fantastic pairing of curators is leading the 2024 Koestler Arts Exhibition. Jeremy has a long association with Southbank Centre and his and John's combined curatorial vision are rooted in a long track record and understanding of arts and the justice system. The imagination can never be locked up and it's vital that we continue to highlight the spaces and organisations within the criminal justice system that encourage artistic expression."

-----

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

**Koestler Arts Press Enquiries**  
Lisa Baker Associates Limited

Lisa Baker

Email: [lisa@lisabakerltd.com](mailto:lisa@lisabakerltd.com)

Tel: + 44 (0)776 8310 038

**JEREMY DELLER:**

Jeremy Deller (b. 1966) studied Art History at the Courtauld Institute and Sussex University. Deller won the Turner Prize in 2004 for his work 'Memory Bucket' and represented Britain in the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. He has been producing projects over the past two decades which have influenced the conventional map of contemporary art. He began making art in the early 1990s, often showing his work outside conventional galleries.

Deller has curated numerous projects including: 'Iggy Pop Life Class', Brooklyn Museum (2016); 'Love is Enough: William Morris and Andy Warhol', Modern Art Oxford (2014); and 'All That is Solid Melts Into Air', Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2014). His filmwork includes 'Putin's Happy' (2019), 'Everybody in the Place (an incomplete history of Britain 1984-92)' (2018), 'So Many ways to Hurt you' (2010), 'Our Hobby is Depeche Mode' (2006).

Jeremy has been a visual arts judge for the annual Koestler Awards for over a decade.

**JOHN COSTI:**

John Costi (b. 1987) is an artist whose work draws on his Cypriot/Irish heritage, and experience of growing up in London. Costi's work analyses upbringing and class as a means of critiquing negative versions of masculinity. He uses sculpture, installation, painting, and performance to map his life. Often improvised and informed by chance, the work lives in the social sphere. He is interested in dismantling hierarchies of art experience, turning passive audiences into active participants. Costi graduated from Central St Martins with an MA in Fine Art in 2022.

**KOESTLER ARTS:**

Koestler Arts is the UK's best-known prison arts charity. Since 1962, it has played a unique role in motivating prisoners, young offenders, secure patients, immigration detainees and people on probation across the whole of the UK to lead creative and positive lives.

Through the annual Koestler Awards scheme, exhibitions, post-release mentoring, employment, and family engagement projects, they harness the transformative power of

the arts to encourage people in secure settings and upon release from custody to reframe their lives free from crime.

Each year, ca. 4,000 people in the criminal justice system send their creative visual, written and audio work into the Koestler Awards, judged by a panel of experts. Entrants receive personalised feedback and certificates to reward and encourage their efforts. Work entered into the Awards can be selected for exhibitions or publication, and has the opportunity to sell.

Throughout the year, Koestler Arts demonstrates the human value and potential of people in prison to the public through a diverse programme of exhibitions and events around the UK. The biggest showcase is at London's Southbank Centre every autumn, visited by ca. 10,000 people. These displays increase public awareness of the otherwise hidden talents of people in secure settings, allowing them a creative voice in a system that can often be silencing.

Past exhibition curators have included Ai Weiwei, Camille Walala, Antony Gormley, Benjamin Zephaniah, Speech DeBelle, Joelle Taylor, Grayson Perry, the families of prisoners, victims of crime, serving female prisoners and graduates of the Koestler Arts mentoring programme.

#### **SOUTHBANK CENTRE:**

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project - that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone - are still our guiding principles today.

The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)