

The Arts Society City of Chichester and Koestler Arts



Our Year at a Glance



The Koestler Awards

Each year, our Awards programme offers people in secure settings the opportunity to engage in something positive, and provides inspiration to keep creating.

In 2024, 3,666 people from secure settings around the UK entered their work into the Koestler Awards. We invited more than 70 judges from across the art and cultural sphere, including those with lived experience of prison, to help us choose award-winners.



Showcasing

Our annual UK exhibition at the Southbank Centre was co-curated by Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller and former Koestler Awards entrant-turned-artist John Costi. Over 10,000 people visited the show, wrote feedback and engaged with the art on display.

We hosted four 'family and friends days' where exhibited artists could invite their loved ones to see their work on display and celebrate their achievements with the Koestler Arts team.



Outreach

We supported 26 prison-leavers as part of our arts mentoring scheme last year, helping them unlock arts, education and employment opportunities in the community.

We invited creatives with lived experience of prison to join us on establishment visits, to encourage participation in the awards and inspire people to continue their transformative journey post-release.

Your Support in 2024

In 2024, the Arts Society City of Chichester generously supported Koestler Arts as an Emerging Talent Patron Organisation, enabling us to reach and motivate more people in the criminal justice system, both locally and across the UK.



We received 7,613 entries to the 2024 Koestler Awards, and were able to give out £31,765 in prize money



We provided further encouragement to entrants under the age of 25 by giving out 39 special awards and £975 of additional prize money to this age group



We hosted 150 volunteers at the Koestler Arts Centre who helped us provide handwritten bespoke feedback to 94% of Koestler Awards entrants!



51 award-winners came from Sussex, 20 of whom won cash prizes for their creative work

We awarded the Arts Society City of Chichester Award to an entrant at HM Prison Lewes in East Sussex.

The colourful drawing featured in our 2024 annual UK exhibition at the Southbank Centre, selected for display by Dr Nicholas Cullinan OBE.



'Exotic Life at the Inn',
HM Prison Lewes, Arts Society City of
Chichester Award for Drawing, 2024

Supported by you...

Work created in the Kent and Sussex region in 2024



'Aubergine', HM Young Offender Institution Cookham Wood, 18 and Under Special Award for Painting



'Exotic Life At the Inn', HM Prison Lewes, Commended Award for Drawing



'Apple', HM Young Offender Institution Cookham Wood, Under 25s Special Award for Painting



'Ballet Shoes', HM Prison Standford Hill (Sheppey Cluster), Painting



'I'll Watch What I Say From Now On', HM Prison Swaleside (Sheppey Cluster), Highly Commended Award for Themed Category: From Now On



Left: 'Top Cat', HM Prison Lewes, Drawing



Middle: 'Woman on Yellow Background', HM Young Offender Institution Cookham Wood, 18 & Under Commended Award for Painting



Right: 'Hare', HM Young Offender Institution Cookham Wood, 18 & Under Highly Commended Award for Painting



Our mission in 2025

Changing lives on the inside

For 60 years, Koestler Arts has been encouraging people in the criminal justice system to change their lives by participating in the arts. Arts and creativity are proven to positively impact mental health, well-being, confidence, education, skills and relationships. A spark of motivation sustained by encouragement can make a real difference to an individual's self-esteem, becoming a stepping stone for positive change and rehabilitation.

We will continue to produce inspirational creative resources that can be utilised by prison educators or by individuals on their own, and will offer a platform for people to have their talent recognised through the Awards & Fast Feedback, arts mentoring, commission opportunities and showcasing.

Changing minds on the outside

The public has few opportunities to learn about the positive work inside prisons and other secure settings — to see the individuals behind the statistics. This increases polarisation and makes successful resettlement even more challenging.

Our rich, accessible, innovative showcasing programme will continue in some of the most popular arts venues across the UK, offering visitors a chance to experience the talent within the criminal justice system, opening up conversations and helping to build communities that support rehabilitation.



Thank you for helping us continue delivering hope and inspiration in 2025!

As a small charity with no endowment, each year we rely on donations from generous individuals, groups and organisations to help us continue delivering our core work.

Your support as an Emerging Talent Patron Organisation will mean we can be there for even more people looking to transform their lives through creativity this year.

*"Being creative has changed my life. It is my escape
and in addition to that the arts have influenced my
education and now I am doing a degree."*

– Under 25 Koestler Awards entrant



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