The Koestler Trust
A report on the 2011 survey of Award entrants

“A sense of freedom to express"
- 2011 Entrant

Report by Richard Brine, July 2012
Based on a survey conducted by the Koestler Trust
January to April 2012
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1 Introduction
Founded in 1962 by the writer Arthur Koestler, the Koestler Trust is the UK’s national charity for awarding, exhibiting and selling artworks by offenders. The Koestler Awards aim to motivate offenders, secure patients and immigration detainees to participate and achieve in the arts, resulting in a range of benefits for them and for the community.

Each year since 2007, the Koestler Trust has sent a questionnaire to every award entrant (together with the participation certificates and prizes). The results are collated in a report which is published on the Trust’s website and reported to the Trust’s Board of Trustees to inform service planning and development.

The 2011 awards attracted a record 7,674 entries in 58 artforms from 290 establishments across the country. The Trust had introduced new initiative specifically to try and attract more entries, so one goal of this year's survey was to find out which initiatives had been most effective in encouraging entries (see section 2.3 below). In most other respects the questionnaire was the same as in 2010.

The results of the 2011 survey, including any appropriate comparisons to previous years, are detailed below.

2 Findings
259 completed surveys were analysed, compared to 149 in 2010, an increase of 74%. This represents significant success for the Trust in terms of receiving feedback from entrants.

2.1 How many years have respondents entered the Koestler Awards?
Entrants were asked how many years they have entered the Koestler Awards. 258/259 respondents answered this question. The majority of respondents, 63% (163/258) had entered for the first time, which indicates the Trust continues to be successful in encouraging new participants in the awards. In 2010, 58% of entrants had entered for the first time.
2.2 How did respondents first hear about the Koestler Awards?

Respondents were asked how they had first heard about the Koestler Awards and were given 9 options to choose from including ‘other’. As the question asked how respondents had first heard about the Awards, only the questionnaires where respondents had ticked one option were analysed. Many respondents had ticked more than one option, making it impossible to determine from which source they had first heard about the Awards. 220/259 (85%) respondents ticked one option only. The majority of respondents (56%, 123/220) first heard about the Awards from a teacher. The full range of answers to this question is given in Figure 2 below. Of the 24 respondents who ticked the ‘other’ category, 9 had heard about the Awards through the Prisoners Abroad Newsletter, with a further 6 from an occupational therapist, although these were all from the same establishment.
How respondents had heard about the Awards was cross-analysed with how many times participants had entered the Awards. Interestingly, of the 22 respondents who had heard about the Awards through the Inside Time newspaper, 20 (91%) had entered for the first time this year.

2.3 Which new initiatives introduced by the Trust in 2011 to attract more entries encouraged respondents to enter the Awards?

The questionnaire listed six new initiatives introduced in 2011 by the Trust in order to attract more entries and respondents were asked which of these, if any, had encouraged them to enter. The most effective initiative was 'Awards for first time entrants' which was either a 'big encouragement' or 'some encouragement' for 61% (142/233) of respondents. This was followed by 'Artworks can be returned to home address' which gave 50% of respondents (107/214) encouragement to enter. Having a 'Freepost address' and 'Themed awards' gave encouragement to 46% (96/210) and 44% (93/210) of respondents respectively. The full range of answers to this question, shown as relative percentages, is given in Figure 3 below.
Within this set of questions, respondents were given the opportunity to tick 'I didn't know this'. 46% of respondents (93/201) did not know about the 'DVD film of Koestler exhibition', 32% (57/180) did not know about 'Fast feedback for under 18s' and 24% (51/210) were unaware of 'Themed awards "Help" and "Tomorrow's prison"'.

This set of questions was further analysed, comparing respondent answers based on how many times they had entered the Awards. For 76% (111/147) of respondents who had entered the Awards for the first time, having 'Awards for first time entrants' encouraged them to enter. For all six initiatives, a higher percentage of respondents who had entered the Awards '4 years or more' ticked the 'I didn't know this' option compared to respondents who had entered '2-3 years' or for whom 'This year was the first time'.

Figure 3: Which initiatives encouraged respondents to enter the Awards
2.4 Winning of Koestler Awards

Respondents were asked if they had won a Koestler Award or Awards in 2011. 67% (168/249) of respondents had. In 2010 the figure was 69%.

The data was further analysed to see if there was any correlation between the number of years a respondent had entered the Awards and whether they had won one in 2011. As figure 4 below shows, the more times a respondent had entered the Awards the higher the percentage of win success. 64% (99/155) of first time entrants won an award compared to 92% (22/24) of respondents who had entered 4 times or more. A similar trend was identified in 2010, although the differences were much smaller (67% to 74%). The trend lends weight to the assumption that the standard of individual entries improves the more often an individual partakes in the Awards.

![Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who won an Award by number of years of entry](image)

2.5 Written feedback on entries

Survey respondents were asked if they had received written feedback and, if so, how helpful they found this. 71% (176/247) of respondents received feedback, an increase of 3% on 2010. As in 2010, more Award winners received written feedback than average (75%, 120/159).

The number of those who had received written feedback and found it either 'helpful' or 'very helpful' was almost the same as 2010 at 95% (164/173), which clearly demonstrates the value of written feedback being provided to those who received it.

Again, as in 2010, attitudes to feedback were further analysed in terms of the number of years a respondent had entered the Awards. Again, the more often a respondent had entered the Awards, the more likely they were to find the feedback they received 'very helpful' - 68% (13/19) of those who had entered '4 years or more' compared to 62% (63/101) who had entered for the first time.

A free text box was provided for respondents who had received written feedback to give their reason for stating how helpful they found the feedback. The majority of comments were very positive, with similar reasons for finding feedback helpful stated as were in 2010.

For some it helped with motivation:
“The feedback provided me with positive comments, which boosted my self-confidence and encouraged me to continue writing.”

“Encouragement from artists which in turn has given me confidence and motivation to strive to improve and study art deeper.”

“Inspires me to be more creative. No longer scared to start a canvas.”

“Encouragement to try again next year and enter further competitions.”

Others value receiving feedback from acknowledged experts in their field:

“This feedback was made by an established writer in her field and was extremely valuable.”

“Any feedback is very encouraging especially from other artists. It gives you in-depth perspective of what you have achieved…”

For some, feedback helps their self-confidence:

“The feedback developed my confidence and self-esteem and self-worth and enabled me to start believing in my own abilities.”

For others, written feedback gives an insight into their work, how they might improve it or what they might do next:

“It was fantastic encouragement with constructive comments so I can produce better work in the future. It also felt really personal.”

“The feedback is constructive, helping me to improve, but it also shows that someone has really looked at the work.”

“The feedback has helped me to think of a project for next time. I’m over the moon.”

For some, just having their work seen or read by others is reward enough:

“It let me know my voice had been heard, someone had valued my opinion and contribution, and made me feel less alone and afraid and hopeful that perhaps there is still a place for me in society.”

Comments made from respondents who stated that written feedback was not very helpful were along similar lines to 2010. A number complained about judges’ handwriting, including this comment:

“I wasn’t able to read the comment and neither were other people I showed it to. This was a disappointment.”

“I’m encouraged by the feedback but I wish these feedbacks could be typed. I have a hard time reading the handwriting.”

Some suggested the feedback was not in-depth enough:

“I submitted a written article and though the ‘brief comment’ was complimentary, it shed no light on the work’s critical worth. I was hoping to receive a little critical direction so that I might improve.”

“Just an opinion and synopsis. No criticisms or advice. No reasons why not good enough or how to improve or what one’s to concentrate on.”
As in 2010, although not requested to, some respondents who did not receive feedback made comments suggesting they would appreciate some:

“I did not receive any feedback therefore it was unhelpful.”

“Would have liked feedback from my work.”

2.6 How well the Koestler Trust handles entries

In 2010, 82% of respondents felt the Koestler Trust either handled their entries ‘very well’ or ‘well’. In 2011 this increased to 89% (193/217) with 56% (122/217) stating ‘very well’ and 33% (71/217) saying well. 11% (24/217) did not think the Trust handled their entries very well, and many commented that they were unable to answer the question as they had not yet received their work back.

Many positive comments were made about work being returned:

“My work was returned in good order.”

“The work I got back last year well looked after and even framed in cardboard. No travel damage at all. Well done.”

Others appreciated knowing what the process was:

“We all know when to enter and how long to wait until announcements of winners. Prize giving was well organised.”

Others felt that communication with the Trust was very good:

“Word always got back to me as to what was happening.”

“Their communications were extremely fast and personal. It made me feel special.”

“I have received correspondence keeping me informed of what was happening to my pictures and everything has a professional feel.”

Others praised the Koestler staff:

“The staff are of such a high calibre.”

There were some negative comments. Some were about a failure of communication:

“I wrote to the Trust 3 times and didn’t get a response at all. No idea why.”

“Complaint received - contacted Koestler Trust on number of occasions, no response. [I will] not enter again.”

Delays in getting work or awards back:

“T ook too long to get back to me and send out the award (T ook 5-7 months)”

“There was a long delay between submitting my entry and the certificate being received.”

“To date not had work returned.”

Some commented on the entry process and the updating of the Koestler web site:

“Koestler Trust need to confirm receipt by return - or perhaps just as soon as the entry is assigned a registration number. The website was slow to update. I helped a particularly anxious prisoner submit his work but the lag in responding caused loads
of problems. I wrote to Koestler Trust, emailed and got staff to phone you but the response was very patchy."

"I had no idea that my entry had even arrived safely. Until I noticed online it had been awarded a gold."

2.7 The difference the Koestler Awards have made to respondents

Respondents were asked what difference the Koestler Awards had made to them in seven different areas – self confidence, achievement in arts activities, achievement in education, ability to get a job, keeping free from crime, relationships with officers and staff, and relationships with friends and family. Respondents were asked indicate if the difference was 'much better', 'a bit better', 'no change', 'a bit worse' or 'much worse'.

In 2011, 8 respondents indicated that entering the awards had had a negative effect in one or more of the 7 different areas, compared to only one respondent in 2010. As in 2010, there was no space available on the questionnaire for respondents to elaborate on their answers and so no further analysis is possible of this.

The difference made to self-confidence

88% (214/242) of respondents said that the Awards made their confidence levels either 'much better' (60%, 145/242) or 'a bit better' (29%, 69/242), a slight drop from 91% in 2010. Again, as in 2010, there was some difference between responses from Award winners and non-Award winners. 93% of winners (145/156) registered an improvement in self-confidence, compared to 80% (61/76) of non-winners. This would tend to suggest that taking part is generally more important than winning, but for some people winning an Award makes a significant difference to self-confidence levels.

The difference made to ability to get a job

There was a significant difference in 2011 in terms of respondents' views about the difference partaking in the Awards make to their ability to get a job compared to 2010. In 2010 just under half of respondents (47%) felt that partaking in the Awards made a positive difference to their ability to get a job; in 2011 this had dropped to 35% (75/214). Respondents were given no space to elaborate on specific differences made. However, one might speculate that, in the current economic climate, many of the UK population as whole might be generally less optimistic about future job prospects than they were the year before and that this is also true of prisoners. Again, although both fewer Award winners and fewer non-Award winners felt participation made a positive difference to their ability to get a job in 2011 compared to 2010, a similar difference between the two groups was identified, with 38% (51/134) of Award winners responding that entering the Koestler Awards made a positive difference compared to 29% (20/70) non-Award winners.

The difference made to success in education

73% (166/227) of respondents (up from 64% in 2010) said success in education was either 'much better' (44%, 100/227) or 'a bit better' (29%, 66/227). Consequently, the number of respondents for whom participation made no change to their success in education dropped from 36% in 2010 to 26% (60/227) in 2011.
The difference made to success in arts activities

90% (213/237) of respondents said that the Awards made success in arts activities either 'a bit better' (37%, 88/237) or 'much better' (53%, 125/237) with 9% (22/237) saying there was 'no change'. In 2010 the combined 'bit better/much better' figure was 81%. Therefore, the Koestler Awards do make a significant difference to respondents in terms of success in arts activities. However, again as in 2010, the difference made for Award winners compared to non-Award winners was different as figure 5 below shows. 59% (91/155) of Award winners responded that success in arts activities was 'much better' compared to 40% (29/72) of non-Award winners. Similarly, only 6% (9/155) of Award winners reported no change, compared to 15% (11/72) of non-Award winners.

![Figure 5: The difference made to success in arts activities for Award and non-Award winners](image)

The difference made to keeping free from crime

66% (147/222) of respondents (60% in 2010) indicated that taking part in the Koestler Awards made either a 'much better' (41%, 92/222) or 'a bit better' (25%, 55/222) difference in terms of keeping free from crime. However, there is a still clearly a large proportion of respondents (33%, 74/222) who feel that other factors will have a bearing on whether they will keep free from crime.

The difference made to relationships with officers and staff

There was a fall from 70% in 2010 to 63% (143/226) of respondents in 2011 for whom their involvement with the Awards has made their relationships with officers and staff either a 'bit better' (31%, 69/226) or 'much better' (33%, 74/226). Two respondents felt that the Awards had made their relationships with officers and staff 'much worse'. Award winners at 66% (95/145) were slightly more positive than non-Award winners at 57% (40/71).
The difference made to relationships with friends and family

39% (87/225) of respondents (37% in 2010) felt that the entry into the Koestler Awards had made relationships with friends and family 'much better', with a further 24% (54/225; 19% in 2010) indicating the difference was 'a bit better'.

A comparison of difference made by number of years of entry

Further analysis was done to see if there were any significant differences in any of the seven areas above between respondents who had entered for the first time, on two or three occasions, or on four or more occasions. In 2010 a similar exercise was carried out, although no definite trends can be identified by comparing the two years, other than - and this is very tentative - that in the areas of 'self-confidence', 'achievement in arts', 'ability to get a job' and 'relationships with friends and family' the more often a respondent enters the more positive they feel about the difference made.

'Relationships with officers and staff' bucks this trend in 2011 - the more a respondent enters the less positive they feel about the difference it will make; but even so, an encouraging 57% (12/21) of respondents who have entered 4 or more times still think that relationships with staff are either 'a bit better' or 'much better' a result of entering the Awards.

![Figure 6: Comparison of difference made in 7 areas by number of years of entry](image)
Further comments about what the Koestler Awards mean to respondents.

Respondents were asked to give any further comments they had about the Awards. 82% (212/259) of respondents made some form of comment. The overwhelming tone of the comments was positive, personal and touching. Many comments touched on the differences made in the areas analysed above:

Self-confidence:

“The award boosted my confidence massively..“

“As my entry was part of a class in prison I didn't expect much to be honest. However, when receiving the award it really boosted my confidence in craft and was really nice recognition.”

Achievement in the arts:

“The awards gave me a chance to have my work recognised and show my achievements with a sense of validity."

“I am now very keen to take my artwork to the next level which I would never have done if I hadn’t won an award.”

Achievement in education:

“The awards gave me reason to continue with my education…”

Ability to get a job:

“Having won several awards for the stage / radio play competitions in the past, on my release I had included this information in my CVs. I was given a job based on this because it gave me an edge over the other candidates - especially as the employer also fancied himself as a bit of a playwright!”

Relationships with friends and family:

“It means a lot to me. I have never done anything like this. My family laughed at first when I said I was cross stitching but they like me to make my own now to send out.”

“My brothers are very impressed with me.”

Other areas highlighted through comments included:

The inspiration to continue:

“It encourages me to take my work more seriously.”

“My entry was the first effort in writing a science fiction story. The work was restricted to the confines of the exercise handed out in class, but it led me on to begin writing a full SF novel, of which I am progressing steadily to this day.”

The thrill of making a sale:

“It’s a real good buzz to know someone brought my painting. Thank you.”

“More money.”

Trying or learning something new:
“I discovered painting in prison after getting some advice from another inmate. It's a lovely pastime that I will continue with when I'm released and I would love to have a career in painting and photography, if ever I get good enough.”

Positivity:

“Really it is down to the Koestler Awards that I have such a positive direction in life. Through them I have discovered skills and a passion.”

Achievement upon release:

“It's given me more belief in myself and the confidence to produce more work. Since leaving prison I've started my own jewellery and crafts business and this award has given me a real boost.”

A way of occupying time constructively:

“It was the most constructive use of time whilst locked up for 6 months.”

Opportunity:

“A sense of freedom to express.”

“Hopefully the award will get me or help get sponsorship for a book I have been planning to do about beauty spots and places of interest around Wales.”

Improved mental health:

“I was in a depressed state prior to receiving this [feedback] and had been for a few weeks, so much so I was shutting myself away from my friends. But receiving these few encouraging words did more than I can say to help bring me out of this period of depression. Please thank the judges.”

Something to cling on to:

“I am in prison due to a miscarriage of justice. Through art I can express my inner feelings without upsetting anyone or creating a scene. When my innocence is finally proven it will be fantastic to look back and reflect thanks to my paintings.”

Scepticism:

“It's only a certificate ain't it?”

2.8 Further comments or ideas for the Koestler Trust

Respondents were asked if they had any comments or ideas for the Koestler Trust. 54% (139/259) made some form of comment. Comments broadly fell into the same categories as in 2010, namely:

Many additional comments were from respondents suggesting ways that more people could see contributions:

“When displaying things in theatres you need to make more of an effort to display the written work as the artwork stands out whereas the written work doesn't.”

“Would it be possible to publish all the prisoner's entries in an annual magazine so that literature and arts can be made available to a wider audience?”

“Some kind of booklet or magazine of the exhibition as a keepsake for exhibitors and exhibition goers alike.”
"Get online, keep doing new things, sell more works commercially."
"Should have video of all the art work for everyone to see."

A lot of comments gave praise for the Koestler Trust and what it does:

"The Trust has a much more positive impact than any institutionalised programme or scheme, and a far bigger impact on reoffending than any government initiative."
"Thank you for opening your organisation to allow British prisoners in foreign prisons to submit their art of all kinds."
"I think you should have an award yourself."
"The Koestler Trust is a well planned and fantastic chance to allow people to show their talents."

Suggestions that the Koestler Trust should do more of the same...

"Just keep doing what you're doing because it is very important to us all."
"Keep doing the wonderful work you are already doing. If it were not for the Koestler Trust I would never have had the determination to keep on trying to achieve something through adversity."
"Keep it up and publicise more within the system."
"Faster, better feedback."

... as well as some blue sky thinking:

"Supply resources."
"Any paintings sold by Scottish prisoners should have the money or the funds to go to art materials."
"Award for LGBT Community."
"What about visitors to the exhibitions being able to enter bids for the work, ie a minimum price for the work?"
"Communicate with prisons regarding the return of artworks which entrants often see as valuable or irreplaceable belongings."
"More advertising and info on how to actually enter a piece is needed."
"To have a free-form category to encourage greater creativity and originality."
"More awards for good art and less for rubbish that looks like it's been made by performing anthropoids."
"The fiction / writing categories sometimes feel secondary to the more visual arts. Could some use of written work, such as published collections, be explored?"
"I would love a copy of my work if possible."
"I would have really like to have seen some photos of the event. A lot of people like to see their work on display."
"It would be great if we could be involved in some projects after release like painting a wall in a probation centre or youth club or guest speaker / artist in a school or training / work."
"Possibly allow prisoners to hear the public's feedback."
“Koestler Trust needs to start being inclusive. How many ex-prisoners sit on the board - how many coordinate services - where's the in reach project - where are the job/career opportunities being made by your organisation?”

“Increase the mentoring schemes and do more work with prisoners in closed conditions.”

2.9 Where responses were received from

76% of returned questionnaires (196/259) were from respondents identified as coming from an institution, the remaining were either private addresses or contact information was not completed. In total, 71 different establishments were named. Of these, 54 establishments were UK prisons, 8 were foreign prisons, 4 were hospitals/secure hospitals, 1 was an Isle of Man prison, 1 was a probation service, 1 was a secure children's home and 2 could not be defined. A table showing which establishments sent in 5 or more responses is given below.

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<tr>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>No of Respondents</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Wakefield</td>
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<td>Featherstone</td>
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The Trust has sent a special prize to the art department at HMP Peterhead for returning the most questionnaires.

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