

Almost Home

The Koestler Arts exhibition for the North East
Co-curated by women at HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Low Newton

19 February – 11 May 2025
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead



From Now On I'm Free to Ride, HM Prison Northumberland, Themed
Category: From Now On

Koestler Arts and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art are pleased to present *Almost Home*, an exhibition showcasing artwork, music and writing made in criminal justice settings in the North East of England. The exhibition has been co-curated by six women serving sentences at HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Low Newton.

Koestler Arts is the UK's best-known prison arts charity. They have been championing and exhibiting artwork from the criminal justice system for over 60 years. Every piece in *Almost Home* was made by someone in a prison, young offender institution or secure hospital, or under supervision in the community, and entered into the 2024 Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice.

The exhibition was curated during four sessions delivered by Koestler Arts in the art class at HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Low Newton, during which the class considered almost 300 works made in the region and selected 70 to be displayed.

One of the exhibition co-curators comments:

“What stood out to me was the raw talent of prisoners. The pain and hope expressed through their artwork. I was very inspired. I hope the visitors feel a connection with the artworks, with the emotions and experiences conveyed by the artists.”

The exhibition selection reflects the women’s shared standpoint, looking outwards and forwards towards freedom and home, while honouring the diversity of experience within the group and among exhibited artists.

Many of the works depict movement, transition, and journeys of various kinds – some turbulent, but all hopeful.

Others reflect the different meanings ‘home’ can have for people. There are the things, people, and places artists miss and look forward to returning to, sources of comfort and community, including city skylines, rural landscapes, pubs, places of worship, food, and pets.

There is also acknowledgement that some people are far from home, in distance or in time, that not everyone has a home to return to, or feels home is a safe place. Some people build it where they are.

The exhibition title, *Almost Home*, is taken from a painting in the exhibition and was felt to capture these varied resonances.

Some of the artworks on display will be available to purchase through the Koestler Arts website. There will also be opportunities for visitors to write feedback on their favourite pieces in the exhibition, which will be sent directly to the exhibited artists.

Fiona Curran, CEO of Koestler Arts, comments:

I’m delighted Koestler Arts is back at the iconic Baltic gallery, sharing examples of the powerful artworks entered into the Awards from the local area — so carefully selected by the women in HM Prison & Young Offender Institution Low Newton.

Koestler Arts

Koestler Arts is the UK’s best-known prison arts charity. Its vision is that the power of the arts unlocks hope, talent and potential in the lives of people in the criminal justice system. Since 1962, the charity has inspired participation in the arts by people in prisons, and beyond, and built public recognition of their creative work, fostering communities that support rehabilitation.

Koestler Arts works with people in prisons, secure hospitals, young offender institutions, secure children’s homes, immigration removal centres and on probation or

community sentences. Its programmes across the UK include a membership scheme, post-release arts mentoring, awards, feedback, participants' family days, exhibitions, events and publications.

Each year, c.3,600 people in the criminal justice system send their creative visual, written and audio work into the Koestler Awards to be assessed by a panel of experts, including past entrants and well-known creatives. Entrants receive personalised feedback and certificates to reward and encourage their efforts. Work entered into the Awards can be selected for showcasing.

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 c.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 Jeremy Deller, Ai Weiwei, Camille Walala, Antony Gormley, Benjamin Zephaniah, Joelle Taylor, Grayson Perry, the families of prisoners, victims of crime, and graduates of the Koestler Arts mentoring programme.

www.koestlerarts.org.uk

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art Baltic is a major international centre for art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. It has welcomed over 9 million visitors since opening in July 2002. Baltic presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions and events and is a world leader in the presentation and commissioning of contemporary visual art.

Housed in a landmark ex-industrial building, Baltic houses 2,600 square metres of art space, making it one of Europe's largest dedicated contemporary art institutions. Baltic has presented the work of over 877 artists of 78 nationalities in 266 exhibitions to date including Joy Labinjo, Hew Locke, Heather Phillipson, Antony Gormley, Cornelia Parker, Daniel Buren, Lubaina Himid, Steve McQueen, Jenny Holzer, Judy Chicago, Lorna Simpson, Imran Peretta, Huma Bhabha and John Akomfrah.

www.baltic.art

Open Wednesday-Sunday, 10am-6pm. Free entry.

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