

Press release

183 More Sleeps: The Koestler Scotland Exhibition, selected by artist Ruth Ewan, opens at Edinburgh's Summerhall

183 More Sleeps is an exhibition of artwork from prisons, secure hospitals, secure children's homes, immigration detention centres and community justice services in Scotland. The display has been selected by artist Ruth Ewan from entries to the 2015 Koestler Awards – a charitable scheme which has been rewarding artistic achievement in the penal and secure sectors for over 50 years.

The exhibition features over 150 artworks including paintings, sculpture, needlecraft, nail art, printmaking, woodcraft, audio, animation and writing, highlighting the range of categories to which entrants can submit their work for the Awards.

Artist Ruth Ewan said *"Having been involved in the Koestler Trust's judging process for the last five years I was delighted to select the exhibition of work from Scotland. Seeing the thousands of artworks packed into the Koestler building at Wormwood Scrubs every year, certain works always stay with me. Entries from across the UK are mixed together and organised into categories, and yet there are always works from Scotland which stand out, some because of their more obvious cultural reference points, but mainly because of what they depict; the Scottish landscape, social realities or a sense of dry wit, evident across the broad range of visual and written work. There is a sense that these works had to be made, these stories need to be told, and the Koestler Trust allows us as viewers to listen to these voices we otherwise cannot, or will not, hear."*

Each year the Koestler Awards receive thousands of entries from across the UK, ranging from paintings and drawings, to matchstick models, poetry and music. This year the total number of entries was 8,509 with a record number of entries from Scotland. Since the first Scotland exhibition in 2009 with Filmhouse, Edinburgh, and through a three year partnership with Tramway, Glasgow, the number of entries has risen yearly, from 287 in 2009 to 1,788 in 2015.

Sally Taylor, Chief Executive of the Koestler Trust said *"We are delighted to be able to showcase the amazing artwork from Scottish prisons and secure establishments with the support of our partners. The quality and quantity of work generated by Scottish establishments has been truly outstanding this year and we look forward to sharing this with the public at such a prestigious venue in Edinburgh."*

Holly Knox Yeoman, Summerhall Exhibitions Manager, said *“We are delighted to be hosting the Koestler Trust’s 183 More Sleeps. Summerhall is dedicated to exploring the transformative power of art and is excited to be providing a platform for imaginative and thought-provoking works by ex-offenders, secure patients and detainees across Scotland. We believe the Summerhall community will find the exhibition and event series engaging and informing, with its discursive approach highlighting the therapeutic and educational potential of creativity, in turn, creating a more understanding and supportive society.”*

The exhibition is part of ‘Freedom in Expression’ a festival presented by the Koestler trust to celebrate the arts within criminal justice and secure settings. The festival includes a programme of events, exhibitions, tours, Scottish Koestler Awards, outreach visits and feedback for the exhibited artists. Next year the festival will move to Tramway, Glasgow with an exhibition and event programme in the winter of 2016.

James King, Head of Offender Learning, Scottish Prison Service, said *“Our success in progressing arts in custody with our learning partners and Koestler Trust, has been key to stimulating engagement and motivating formerly reluctant learners to build confidence and self-belief”*

The project is supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland, with additional support from the Robertson Trust and the Souter Charitable Trust.

Joan Parr, Head of Creative Learning at Creative Scotland, said: *“We’re delighted to be working in partnership with The Koestler Trust as they deliver this Freedom of Expression exhibition. 183 More Sleeps: The Koestler Scotland Exhibition showcases the work of some very talented people across an impressive range of multi-art forms. 19 Scottish justice institutions have recently won Koestler Awards, helping to raise the profile of the arts, and the benefits of participation within arts activity, in the criminal justice system. Congratulations to all the artists who have contributed, and we wish The Koestler Trust every success with this exhibition.”*

Notes to editors

For images and/or further information please contact:
Sarah Grainger-Jones, Deputy Director of Arts at the Koestler Trust
Email: sgraingerjones@koestlertrust.org.uk or call 020 8740 0333

1: About the Exhibition

Summerhall
1 Summerhall
Edinburgh
EH9 1PL
Exhibition open 7 – 29 November
Daily 11am–6pm
Free entry

For more details and a programme of associated events visit
www.koestlertrust.org.uk

2: The Koestler Trust is the UK's best-known prison arts charity. Founded by writer Arthur Koestler (author of the classic prison novel *Darkness at Noon*), it has been awarding, exhibiting and selling artworks by offenders, detainees and secure patients for 53 years. The Koestler Awards receive over 8,000 entries a year in 61 artforms from over 300 prisons and other establishments - inspiring offenders to take part in the arts, raise their aspirations and transform their lives. Koestler exhibitions attract 50,000 visitors at venues across the country annually - showing the public the talent and potential of offenders and people in secure settings. The Trust has no endowment or capital - its work depends entirely on grants and donations.

The Koestler Trust's aims are:

- To help offenders, secure patients and detainees lead more positive lives by motivating them to participate and achieve in the arts
- To increase public awareness and understanding of arts by offenders, secure patients and detainees
- To be a dynamic, responsive organisation, which achieves excellent quality and value for money.

The exhibition is part of 'Freedom in Expression' a two year festival presented by the Koestler Trust to celebrate the arts within criminal justice and secure settings with a programme of events, tours, Scottish Koestler Awards, outreach visits and feedback for the exhibited artists, focused around the exhibitions. Next year the festival will move to Tramway, Glasgow with an exhibition and event programme in the winter of 2016.

Visit www.koestlertrust.org.uk for more details of the Trust's work.

3: Artist Ruth Ewan (born in Aberdeen) studied Drawing and Painting at Edinburgh College of Art and now lives and works in London. Her work takes many forms including events, installation and printed matter. Her practice explores histories of radical, political and utopian thought, bringing to light specific ideas in order to question how we might live today. Often engaging with others, her projects involve a process of focused research and close collaboration – in the past she has worked with historians, magicians, traditional craftspeople, horticulturalists, archeologists, musicians, bakers and children.

Exhibitions of her work have been presented at Camden Arts Centre, London (2015); Tate Britain and the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh (with Astrid Johnston) (2014 and 2013); the Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art (2012); Dundee Contemporary Arts (2011); the ICA, London (2008); and showcased as part of Generation: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland.

Ruth has been a judge for the Mixed Media category of the main Koestler Awards since 2010.

4: Summerhall, formerly the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, has been converted into an arts complex supporting the interrelationship and importance of the arts within the fabric of society. It has gained its reputation by showing the very best in experimental and contemporary visual and performance art.

Summerhall general enquiries 0131 560 1580

www.summerhall.co.uk

5: Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit www.creativescotland.com. Follow us @creativescots and www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland