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AWARD-WINNING ART BY OFFENDERS, SELECTED AND CURATED BY SERVING WOMEN PRISONERS, GOES ON SHOW AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

Southbank Centre announces the 48th annual Koestler Awards exhibition 'Art by Offenders, Secure Patients and Detainees' on show at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre. Opening 20 October until 6 December, the exhibition includes some 130 exhibits created by inmates of prisons, young offender institutions, secure hospitals and immigration removal centres across the UK, as well as offenders supervised by probation and youth offending services and British prisoners abroad.

In a departure from previous years, the 2009 show is the first national art exhibition curated by serving prisoners. All the curators are from a women's prison, giving the selection of 130 works a distinctly female perspective. The six curators were carefully chosen from women nearing the end of their sentences at HM Prison Downview in Surrey. As part of the nine-week educational project, the women have undergone intensive training, selected the exhibits, designed and built the displays and will be giving exhibition talks and tours. Each of the women involved will receive guidance about where to aim next with the new skills that they have learnt.

Jude Kelly, Artistic Director Southbank Centre said:

"We are delighted to welcome back the Koestler Trust awards to the Royal Festival Hall, in the second year of a continuing partnership with Southbank Centre. We wholeheartedly support their work and philosophy. Developing the skills to express ideas and emotions through art and craft gives each prisoner and detainee a new sense of what is possible in their life and how they can build a different future for themselves."

Tim Robertson, Chief Executive the Koestler Trust said:

"Given the rising prison population, it may be obvious that the number of artworks entered for Koestler Awards should continue to grow each year. What is more remarkable is that the quality of the work is clearly rising too. And the women prisoners who have curated this year's exhibition have shed it in a fascinating new light. Their selections feel warmly personal, sometimes dark, but with marvelous flashes of humour, and a particular emphasis on careful detail and discipline. They are giving those of us outside prison an unprecedented insight into custody, creativity and gender."

Organised by The Koestler Trust, the UK's best known prison arts charity, this year's Awards attracted 5,867 entries, with prizes awarded in 52 categories. The exhibition includes film, music and writing alongside the visual arts. Visitors are invited to vote for extra awards sponsored by the Wates family, owners of one of the UK's largest construction companies, the Wates Group.

All of the work in the exhibition has been made in the last year, and includes painting, sculpture, drawing, ceramics, textiles and other media. The female curators have been instrumental in shaping the design and hang at Southbank Centre, and some of their comments are included in the displays.

The Awards, now in their 48th year, aim to promote creativity across the criminal justice system. Many of the works are for sale at modest prices, with half the proceeds going to the artist. The sales provide invaluable financial support for the Koestler Trust, and 10% goes to Victim Support, the national charity for people affected by crime.

The Co-operative is proud to support the work of the Koestler Trust as part of its commitment to communities across the UK.

Exhibits and awards by under 18s are supported by the Youth Justice Board, the Government agency for the youth justice system in England and Wales.

ART BY OFFENDERS, SECURE PATIENTS AND DETAINEES

Koestler Awards exhibition

20 October – 6 December 2009

Spirit Level, Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre

Admission free. Open daily 10am – 11pm

For further press information on the exhibition and quotes for media use please contact Gillian Fox, Southbank Centre Press Office 020 7921 0631: email gillian.fox@southbankcentre.co.uk

Notes to Editors

Some Facts about Women in Jail

- 5% of the prison population is female (4,232 out of 84,382 prisoners, England and Wales, September 2009).
- 15% of entrants to the Koestler Awards are female (422 out of 2,848 entrants, UK-wide, 2009). There are 16 women's prisons in the UK (none in Wales).
- The women's prison population is 60% higher than it was 12 years ago, but it has fallen by 8% in the last 3 years.
- 68% of women are in prison for non-violent offences, compared with 47% of men.
- Women offenders are more likely than men to complete community sentences successfully.
- 71% of women prisoners have no qualifications, compared with 52% of men.
- There are 8 Mother & Baby Units in English prisons, offering accommodation for up to 75 women and their babies at a time.

Sources: Ministry of Justice and Prison Reform Trust.

The Koestler Trust

The Koestler Trust was founded by the writer Arthur Koestler in 1962 to support the creation of art in prisons, and has subsequently developed a unique role that is recognised across the criminal justice system. It aims

are to help offenders lead more positive lives by motivating them to participate in the creative arts and to demonstrate the power of arts activity in the criminal justice system.

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 *Festival of Britain*. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and The Hayward as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. The Hayward manages Hayward Touring exhibitions; and the Arts Council Collection on behalf of Arts Council England.

Youth Justice Board

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) is pleased to support the Koestler Trust's 2008 exhibition to mark our 10th anniversary. The YJB works to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people under the age of 18, and to ensure that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour. In the last decade, the youth justice system has changed significantly. There is now a greater emphasis on local communities, families and schools working together to prevent young people from getting involved in crime and encouraging them to take part in more positive activities instead. Over 8,000 volunteers provide support and mentoring for young people and, if a young person does offend and is brought to court, this takes place more quickly than ever before.

Press Images

Images of works from the Koestler Awards exhibition are available to download from Southbank Centre's online press image service. To register please visit <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/press-release/press-images>