

Information

10 March – 3 June 2018

Opening Event: Friday, 16 March, 6 – 9pm

Chip Night

The Koestler East of England Exhibition curated by Firstsite's Young Art Kommunity



Firstsite, Colchester, in partnership with the Koestler Trust, is delighted to present *Chip Night*, an exhibition of artwork, writing and music from people in prisons, secure hospitals and on community sentences in the East of England. Curated by Firstsite's Young Art Kommunity (YAK), the exhibition is drawn from works submitted to the 2017 Koestler Awards – an annual awards programme spanning 52 artforms.

The Koestler Trust was set up in 1962 to help offenders, secure patients and detainees lead more positive lives by motivating them to participate and achieve in the arts. Each year, the awards attract thousands of entries from across the UK's criminal justice and secure sectors. Last year's judges included the Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller, documentary filmmaker Louis Theroux, celebrity hairstylist Louise Galvin and musicians Ghetts and Hot Chip.

Chip Night is comprised of writing, music, and works of visual arts across the disciplines of painting, needlecraft, sculpture, woodcraft, mixed media, drawing, textiles, and digital art. The show's title derives from an essay about chips and the important role that they play in the author's life in prison. For YAK, the essay acts as a vehicle to narrate personal stories and explore the emotions and nostalgia that food can invoke.

Throughout the exhibition-making process, members of YAK have undertaken curatorial development sessions with the Koestler Trust and Firstsite staff. YAK has curated the works in small groups or pairings, exploring how themes might work across the various mediums. In Firstsite's year of identity, *Chip Night* looks at how one's sense of selfhood and Britishness can be impacted by social circumstances.

The exhibition includes personal responses by YAK. These will be further developed in two public tours that will take place during the exhibition, led by members of the group in collaboration with the Koestler Trust.

During the opening event on 16 March, Snape Maltings in Suffolk will showcase their 'Singing Prison' project through musical performances. The music performed has been written by participants at HM Prison Warren Hill as part of an ongoing partnership exploring singing, songwriting and performance.

Says Firstsite Director Sally Shaw: *'We are proud to be presenting this intriguing show, which brings to together one aspect of the admirable and important work of the Koestler Trust, and Firstsite's brilliant young team of curators from YAK.'*

Says Koestler Trust Chief Executive Sally Taylor: *'We are delighted to be making our first visit to the East of England at Firstsite, and to work with their talented young curators to produce this moving and thought-provoking show. We hope the exhibition will both entertain and engage visitors, and we encourage everyone to respond to the work – all their comments will be returned to the artists.'*

**For more information, please contact
Albany Arts Communications**

Carla von der Becke,
carla@albanyartscommunications.com

t: + 44 (0) 20 73 88 09 97
m: + 44 (0) 79 74 25 29 94

Notes to Editors:

About Koestler Trust:

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 over 55 years. The Koestler Awards receive over 7,000 entries a year in 52 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 over 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.

For more details of the Trust's work, please visit: www.koestlertrust.org.uk

About Firstsite:

Firstsite is a public contemporary art gallery in Colchester, Essex. Over the last fifteen years it has gained a strong reputation, presenting ambitious work to new audiences in the East of England and beyond. Situated in Colchester's 'cultural quarter,' the present building was designed by Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly, and opened in 2011. Firstsite is a partner of Plus Tate, which uses Tate's resources to contribute to a network of arts organisations across the country, and to increase public access to the national collection of British and international modern and contemporary art. Current exhibition: *Power for the People*, a presentation of works by the British artist Rose Finn-Kelcey (ends 4 March).

Firstsite opening hours:
Monday – Sunday, 10am – 5pm

Please visit the Firstsite website for more information:

www.firstsite.uk

#ChipNight
#Firstsite
#KoestlerAwards



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