



# Who is the stranger in me?

AtWork No. 24 Milan

**BASE**

At  
Work

Moleskine  
Foundation



## AtWork Milano

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### Who is the stranger in me?

No. 24

October 17 - October 21 2023

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Fabio Orioli

Sondos Shuaib

Francesca Hadija Sanneh

# Who is the stranger in me?

AtWork No. 24 Milano

## EXHIBITION

October 23 - October 30, 2023

BASE Milano

Exhibition of the notebooks created by the participants during AtWork workshop conducted by

**Simon Njami** at  
BASE Milano.

AtWork is an itinerant educational format conceived by Moleskine Foundation and Simon Njami that wants to inspire a new generation of creative thinkers.

**BASE**

**Moleskine**  
Foundation

**At**  
Work



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# UNVEILING THE STRANGER

## *Editors' statement*

*“Knowing the stranger inside of us is an ongoing process. We began this collective journey and traversed it together for a week, but we will continue it for the rest of our lives.”*

This was a week of tremendous transformation, releasing and exposing our strangers who walked around the room with us, and instilling confidence in our understanding of the self. We were brutally honest, we laughed with each other and ourselves, we cried, and importantly, we consumed a lot of candies.

All of us go through our lives with internalised feelings that escape introspection. Looking at the stranger inside of oneself is incredibly confronting. What are the parts of us that do not enter our consciousness in our daily lives? Who is lurking behind the shadows? Where do they come from? What does it mean to know oneself? Then, what do we do with this awareness?

We were forced to reckon with questions we do not even ask ourselves, let alone nineteen strangers who just met: 'give me a reason to love you'. From that followed a series of sharp and stimulating discussions, and collective exquisite (if you

will) exercises that invoked constructive (inner) disputes, healthy critique, and a confrontation with our then-unknown strangers. The rapid rivers of the workshop undressed and interrogated the streams of our collective consciousness, both investigating our mental universe and developing the tools to communicate its logics and trajectories to each other.

We joined from all points from the globe, finding commonality that arose against alterity, through Simon Njami's unique pedagogical approach that allowed us to understand ourselves, and therefore each other, more than we thought was possible.

Knowing the stranger inside of us is an ongoing process. We began this collective journey and traversed it together for a week, but we will continue it for the rest of our lives.

**Shiza Naveed**  
*Editor In Chief*  
*October 2023*



# OPEN UP

## Curatorial statement

*“With this exhibition you will take part of stories of other humans books; are you ready to open yours? “*

This exhibition is more than a showcase; it is an exploration of the question mark itself. And the question mark is maybe nothing else than that stranger we all carry within ourselves. It is an invitation, a question and a journey that delves into the multifaceted realms of cultural and social change, individual growth and the fascination of connecting.

Featuring 19 captivating objects from a group of diverse minds, “Open Up?” is celebrating the delicate or rough transformation of a humble “thing” as a notebook. These pieces akin to Pandora’s box, now represent not only artistic expression but also a sanctuary of thoughts, emotions, and experiences, thoughtfully documented by the authors. They are a metaphorical safety bag, an intimate place where one can reveal vulnerabilities and discover strengths or unlocking inner secrets. As you explore these transformed notebooks, you’re encouraged to reflect on your own personal space, your own canvas for self-discovery, and the untold stories that unfold within.

The fight for understanding and the courage to open up are gently portrayed within these pages, akin to an epistaxis, inviting you to explore the balance between vulnerability and strength. Carry with you the message of empathy and connection as you engage with the strangers and friends you meet on your unique journey. May this exhibition serve as a reminder that, in embracing the question mark, you discover the most authentic parts of yourself and uncover the beauty of the world that surrounds you.

“Open up ? “ is a dive into the collective memory, a space of eruption and transformation, like a wormhole into a redux world where the past meets the present. It’s an equation where  $1+1=1$ , a merging of souls and stories, revealing that unity is found in diversity, and that even inner secrets can be shared and celebrated. With this exhibition you will take part of stories of other humans books; are you ready to open yours?

**Fabio Orioli**  
Curator  
October 2023



# A REDUX WORLD

by *Oluyomi  
Akinragbe*

This work shows us the intangible strength that exists in a world full of uprising and fragility.



**W** [www.oluyomiakinragbe.com](http://www.oluyomiakinragbe.com)

## The stranger in me is **MY STRENGTH**

I use documentary photography and other available mediums to unravel human stories and interpret them to defy the existential norms created by society. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, my passion for my community has led me to the role of assistant creative director at Kuta Arts Foundation. My work has been exhibited at the 13th edition of the Lagos Photo Festival by the African Artist Foundation. I have also participated in the Lagos Photojournalism Festival workshop by the Institut Francaise de Lagos.





# YOU KNOW ME BUT YOU DON'T KNOW ME

by Chiara Berard



My reversed notebook has two sides: the front represents my openness to the world and my public life, with all its facets portrayed by the reflective material. The back is my private polyhedric soul: complicated, chaotic, ill, colourful. The blank spaces show forced medicines abuse, but there is always one for emergencies. The pages, that we can't read, have poems and writings, from my past notebooks about love, life, struggles, words that have stained and swollen the pages as they dripped under the water.



E berardchiara@gmail.com  
IG chiara\_berard

## The stranger in me is **MULTIFACETED**

Errant and polyhedric soul, I was born in Aosta, Italy, in 1998. Curiosity, determination and love guide me. Always against social injustice, as a victim of bullying and then as a woman, chronically ill, queer, neurodivergent person. Activist and politician, I always try to improve the small part of the world around me. I love to communicate, stay informed and to inform. Whether through photography, singing, writing, performance art, or anything I have the opportunity to experiment with, creating art always has allowed me to show my point of view and to express at the best my emotions.



# STANDING OUT OF TIME

by Gaia Calzi



Standing-out: a) project from a surface; b) persist in opposition or support of something; c) to be easily seen or noticed.

Out-standing: a) clearly very much better than what is usual; b) not yet done, solved or paid.

Excellent, but out of place. Persistent but unsolved. Caught up in the middle of too soon and too late, too old and too young, in the middle of leaning toward the future, devouring the present and looking back to the past. I add pages that occupy spaces that are not supposed to be theirs, to write and read stories that are still untold, out of a standard that exists only in our heads. Let the future happen.

The stranger in me is

## TIMING

I am an inter-reader, I like simple things and making plans that hardly work out the way I planned. I love wine at the end of the day and enjoy being the dumbest in the room.





# THIS IS NOT A NOTEBOOK

by Sarah Cerabona

From an early age, people try to define us and to fit us into certain roles: so what is a notebook? Who is the stranger? What are we? Who am I? They tear us apart, write on us, order us. Maybe at the end it's okay not to be okay, it's okay to burst, it's okay not to be a notebook. Because everything is possible but so is nothing. And you know what? People call me in many ways, but you can simply call me "Alchemy".



IG sarah\_cera93

## The stranger in me is **MYSELF**

I'm an Italian-Peruvian person who loves working as an intercultural mediator and in the non-profit field in different ways. I'm crazy for books, music and dance.  
I'm not so good at describing myself, so I just see me as "something somehow in transformation".



# LOOK AT ME IN THE EYES

by Simone Colistra



I recreated the composition of eyes that appears when I gaze into the abyss and the abyss gazes back at me.

It's a kaleidoscope of memories and possibilities where I find my fears and dark sides.

I can't hold my gaze and I look away. I cover it with wax, sealing every fracture. I distract myself and pretend it doesn't exist, but it's there.

How do I unveil my eyes and confront the abyss with honesty and clarity? How do I hold the gaze of Life?



## The stranger in me is **THE ABYSS**

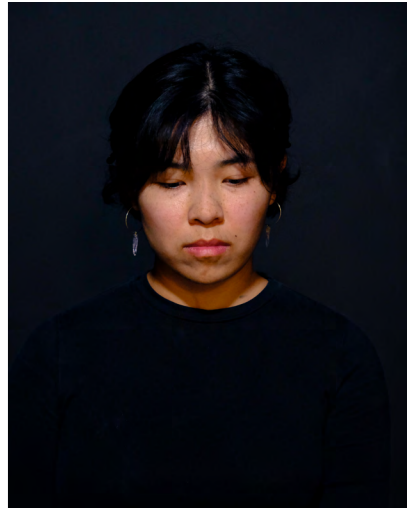
Sometimes I'm fragmented and unstable.  
Sometimes I'm too confident.  
I don't know who I am.  
I should chill out.  
I'm only a human being.





# INNER SECRETS

by Linda Do Thi



IG do.this.linda

This piece represents a library that resides within me. It explores the family secrets, specifically the relationship between my father and I.

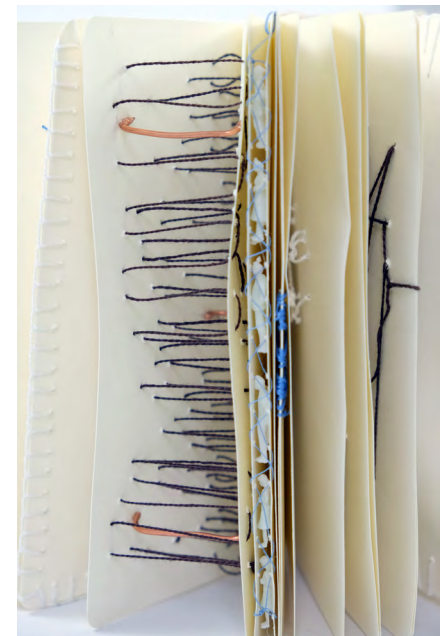
On dusty shelves, I found stories of love, loss, and boundless joy. Some are mine, others bear the traces of my dearest friends', yet YOU wrote one I long to explore. Am I prepared?

Every now and then, you share a chapter with me, like a precious gift. I cannot read it alone. So, I await patiently in the garden for our moment.

I wonder how much remains hidden, but I don't dare to ask. Maybe one day I shall muster the courage and we unveil the mystery of the unspoken together. But, if that day never comes it will live in the book of regret forever.

## The stranger in me is A BOOK

I am Linda. I create and I am afraid. Constantly split between Vietnamese and Czech culture. Forever playful and sometimes ungrateful. Professionally trained as an architect but continually searching to learn a new craft.



# STRATIFICATION

by Jermay Micheal Gabriel

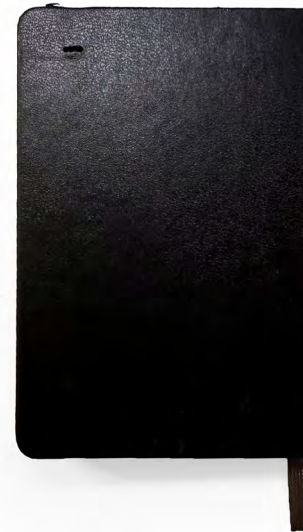
I chose to focus on the theme of stratification, examining how this idea can manifest itself in different contexts. Stratification is a way to explore the complexity of human relationships, both internal and external.

I chose to use combustion as a key element. Combustion is a process that involves transformation, destruction and creation. It is an act of radical change. The choice of this visual element is intended to stimulate reflection on our own inner transformations.



The stranger in me is  
**MYSELF, MY BODY**

I am, we are, they are Jermay Micheal Gabriel.





# MY IDEAL BAG

by Polina Levishko



Since the 24th of February 2022, I always take my bug-out bag wherever I travel around Ukraine or abroad. It has all of my documents, diplomas, and valuables. So, in case any tragedy happens to my apartment, city, or the whole of Ukraine, I will have some basic things to restart my life.

But I'm dreaming about having my ideal bag instead, filled with happy memories, gratitude, dreams, and plans. So, I created one. And I'm glad to donate it to the Moleskine Foundation - so it'll be in a safe place. And I hope to return one day to take it with me to use in Ukraine.

## The stranger in me is **THE FEAR OF LOSING EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING I LOVE**

I'm a life lover, word player, and culture explorer. I'm interested in the themes of childhood, the confrontation between nature and civilization, the aestheticization of routine, and the border between the sacred and the profane in our daily lives.



# ERUPTION

by Flavia Monfrini



Eruption is a dive into finding life where (apparently) there isn't any. To find a possibility in the lack of something, in the need for love. I think that stones can teach us something about it. So can volcanic eruptions. To feel the memory and the present together in a possible, precarious, precious moment. You are invited to insert your fingers in the pocket, with the most delicate curiosity. The curiosity of a child, of a cautious creature that wanders in the world.

## The stranger in me is **A STONE**

I was born in 1997. I live in Catania (Sicily) and I work in the theatre field; I'm involved in planning and realising expressive research programs and social projects with people who want to work on meeting the others, listening, communication and creativity. I am curious and passionate about different ways of making poetry in human life.





# DAMAGED CHILDHOOD

by Asia Musicco



The title of my work is Damaged Childhood and it represents mental illnesses and how they are perceived by society.

The cover shows fascinating red and scary scars, which damage the notebook and you are - not so - kindly invited to open it and discover what's inside.

If you're brave enough, you will go through the healing process of art and arrive at the less damaged last page. But there is no coming back.

In the end, you will feel the urge to fix.



IG in.continente

## The stranger in me is **MY MIND, WHICH ALWAYS COMES BEFORE ME**

Born and raised in Milan, my roots are divided between here and Trani, Puglia.

After a classical education in a Catholic high school, I started to study Psychology. Growing up I discovered queerness, feminism, antiracism and the activism I am involved in right now.

I dedicated my life to education, art and fight.



# LOOP-HOLE

by Hasti Naddafi



This piece represents the oppression that Iranian people face by the Islamic Republic of Iran. An oppression that creates holes in the souls of the protesters, humiliating and silencing them, and then hanging them, even before piercing their bodies through the bullets that the Iranian corps shoot at them, extinguishing the revolutionary fire at every dawn. The family becomes an integral part of this state censorship, restraining the spirit of rebellion of the children. Censoring and silencing them in order to allow them to live longer and not make them sacrificial victims of a forgotten freedom. But despite all this, in the dirt there is light, represented by the slogan outside that reads “zan, zendegi, azadi”, “woman, life, freedom”.

The stranger in me is

## MY INTERNAL CENSORSHIP

I'm Hasti Naddafi.  
I act to survive.  
I write to breathe.  
And to change the world, I love.





# CHASING LIGHT

by Shiza Naveed



**W** shizanaveed@gmail.com  
**IG** shizaaaaa

Repressed childhood trauma created a new stranger inside of me, one that thinks and speaks against my thoughts and beliefs, and sometimes derails me into doomed conversation with him - akin to a moth and a flame. His limbs elongate and to entangle and drag me back while I continue to try and find the light again to feel light again.

This is the monster of today, and he will not look like this tomorrow. The time where I become stronger and his strength weakens grows closer by the day.

My wings will not tire, I can almost reach the light.

## The stranger in me is **A MONSTER**

I was born in South Asia. I paint on canvas, walls, and pretty much anything else I can get my hands on. Sometimes I write, and I never skip dessert.



# EPISTAXIS

by Fabio Orioli

The title of my piece itself, “Epistaxis,” is a fancy medical term for nosebleeds. But for me, it’s simply a memory of my daily childhood with blood issues and all the experiences that came with it.

The notebook becomes a delicate space where the inside and outside are juxtaposed. Coming in and coming out from this space always made it possible for me to understand myself better and to share my story with others.

The pages are holding and letting out at the same time how I feel. My “Epistaxis” is a reminder of my fragility and an opportunity to let them out and paint them with a scarlet red.



IG fabiorioli  
IG acronima\_aps

## The stranger in me is **A SHY KID**

I'm 24 years old and I enjoy cooking, eating, animals, vintage, and occasionally writing my thoughts.

If you ask me what I want to be when I grow up, I'll simply respond, “a creative person”. I don't like to label myself, but one thing I'm sure about in life is that I want to create ART in every possible way.

Over the past year, I've been drawing countless images, some of which have turned into animations, and others into small books or giant murals that are otherwise themes part of my daily life, with a sensitive eye to the queer community.





# COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF HOME

by *Aliaksandra  
Rameika*

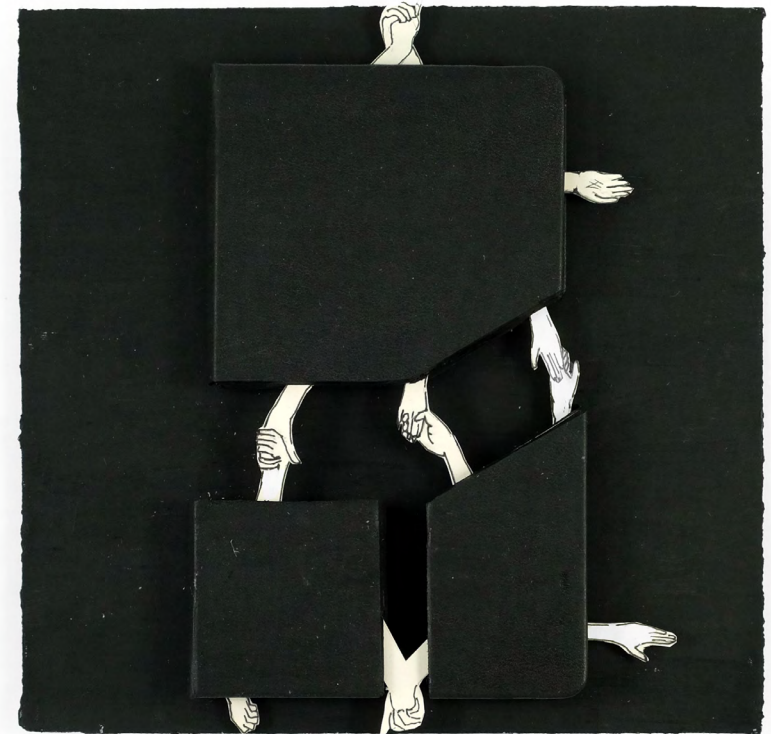


The mass migration from my country started in August 2020 after the beginning of political instability. It happened and is still ongoing for various reasons - political persecution and repression, economic instability, relocation due to sanctions, ideological differences, etc. But almost everyone left with the hope of coming back (within a year), hoping that the political situation will change soon. Like me...

It has already been over a year, and it seems indefinite, with a continuous disconnection from home, where memories of my country become traces of the past. But I am not alone, we are many with our personal memories that we share to support each other and unite around our common loss in the endless chaos of migration.

## The stranger in me is **A CHAOS**

An urban planner and policy designer by profession, an advocate of social change in action, an explorer by passion, and a flamenco dancer in a dream. A Belarusian in search of my place in the world.



# INTIMATE EXPLORATIONS

by Pablo Ruiz  
Naime

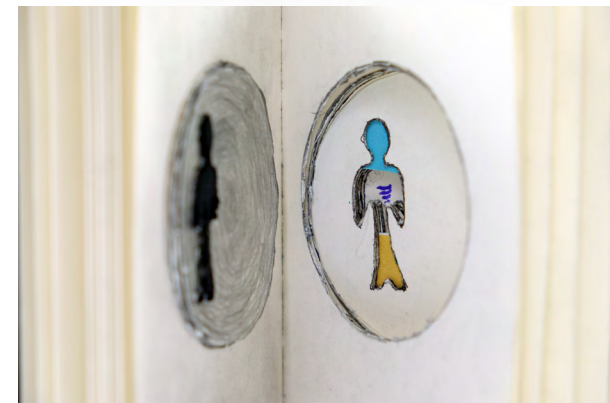
The stranger in me,  
The other strangers,  
The relations amongst us.

In odd encounters,  
We meet as strangers,  
And after intimate exchanges,  
Leave as strangers.



## The stranger in me is **THE MULTIPLE ME(S)**

Amateur wanderer and improviser. I do not really know what I like or who I am but I start by pretending to know what I don't like and who I am not.





# PANDORA'S BOX

by Sanskriti Sharma

Your body is a Pandora's box! Keep it to yourself as the deepest secret.

This box now is opened by an unwanted touch, without a warning or consent. This lead to the eruption of violent waves towards the body, which are dyed by chai and poetry coming through it (Pandora's box by Nikita Gill) to give a sense of comfort to the traumatised body. This is when the stranger was discovered as the saviour, guarding this Pandora's box.



IG [bysanskriti](#)

## The stranger in me is A SAVIOUR

I am a fashion designer and writer based in Milan and raised in India. I turn my overflow of heart into art and fashion. I work on supporting sustainable fashion and girl's education with my brand. I believe that kindness and creativity can make this world a better place to live.



# TURBULENT RIVER

by Sondos Shuaib

War approaches and my people scatter worldwide, two powerful symbols remain with me: the memory of the Greatest Starling Bluebird and the Nile River from my homeland, Sudan. The bluebird embodies hope for the future, while the timeless Nile has borne witness to our history, including the tragic Khartoum massacre on June 3, 2019, when the Sudanese revolution lost its innocence and countless youths were ruthlessly lost and discarded into its waters. This dark chapter turned blue into a symbol of solidarity, representing the lingering sorrow in my heart. The Nile, forever carrying the memory of those lost souls who couldn't be properly laid to rest, stands as a silent testament to the world's cruelty.



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The stranger in me is

## A STRANGER TO YOU, NOT TO ME

I'm an art explorer in all its forms. I am certain that art threads souls across time and space, offering salvation to embrace. I am an eternal wanderer, and each step becomes a leap into the vast unknown within the realm of dreams and imagination.





# THE QUEST

by *Dominique Signoroni Kuroyanagi*



By digging into the many layers we are made of, one might be surprised to discover a seed - you didn't know you had - ready to blossom.



**W** [www.nomadpaper.com](http://www.nomadpaper.com)

The stranger in me is

## THE INFINITE POSSIBILITIES WITHIN ME

Wanderlust at heart, I am driven by a personal research that has taken me on a long journey; fascinated by cities I see as laboratories, I develop editorial projects exploring creativity in every corner of the globe. At least that's my dream.



1+1=1, 1-1=0

by *Francesca  
Hadija Sanneh*

Tree bark for Mère Ndiaye, for the sweet and powerful wrinkles on her skin, both witnesses of history and life.

Green fields and mushrooms for Nonna Agnese, her knowledge so unique to those who live in and with nature.

Their relationship allows the world: fungi build underground networks among roots, allowing trees to transfer each other nutrients and fundamental information.

Contrary to what was thought and taught, nature's rule isn't competition but mutualism.

The same fake order dooms cultures and people, erasing history and futures in the name of profit, homologation, and domination.

Hadija and Francesca are the same and different. Beautiful subversive routes and grandmothers and powers braid them together, as they face each other because they're 1 and without one they would be None.



## The stranger in me is **MYSELF**

Maneu doumou Idris + Mimma la.

I am the daughter of Idris + Mimma, golden sands and dunes and vertical greens and whites, pink and blue lakes, yellow and grey skies. I love sounds and I believe in beauty and movement.





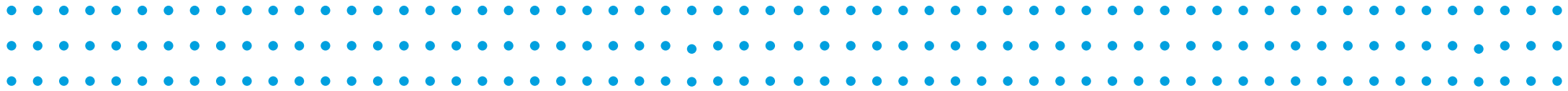


**IN CANDIES WE TRUST !**

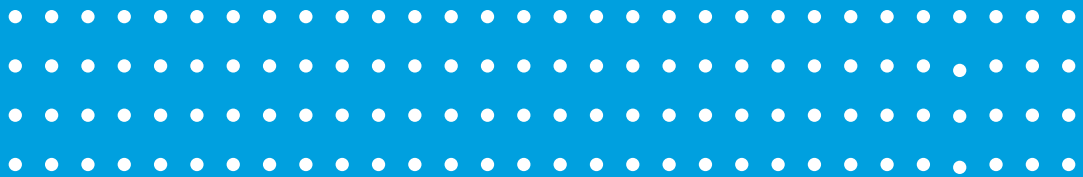
## Many thanks to

We would like to thank Elena Korzhenevich, Rossella Zanelli, Daniele Carlini, Ambre Gnanadicom, and the entire Moleskine Foundation team for organising this transformative experience and supporting us. We want to thank Raffaele Bellezza for patiently capturing us throughout the week. Thank you Brixhilda Shqalsi for performing for us during our opening. Thank you BASE Milano for hosting us, in particular Eleonora Savina and Gaia Calzi for ensuring that we had a smooth and wonderful experience. And a special thank you to the BASE Bar team, who had to deal with nineteen dazed and hungry people searching for their strangers all week.

Finally, thank you to Simon Njami, who dug in deep to help us uncover the strangers within us - for your honesty, brutality, and kindness (because kindness is more important than niceness).







BASE

Moleskin<sup>■</sup>  
Foundation

At  
Work<sup>■</sup>