



What Comes First?

AtWork No. 19 Milan

BASE

At
Work

Moleskine
Foundation

Info

This catalogue contains the output of the 19th edition of AtWork workshop, which took place from January 24 to January 28, 2022 at BASE, Milan. The exhibition with the notebooks created by the participants is running from January 31 to February 18 2022 at BASE.

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

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Editors' statement

At the gates of our adulthood we have faced countless questions: Where am I going? What am I doing? Will I be enough?

Even before coming to AtWork, each of us had an idea of how it felt to glance down into the vortex that "growing up" is. From despair, loss of direction, to confidence and courage. Despite how different our starting points were, we all stumbled here and underwent an interrogation of ourselves. A light was pointed at us, and it questioned us on what haunts every young person since they realise time is running out, that they had grown up and it was time to act. It seems such a simple question. What comes first? But from this point we've explored so many others just as difficult to answer. Why do we value what we do? What are we striving for? And how can we truly reach our dreams? How much has history impacted us and how we see the world? Can we learn from it, to see who has tried before us? To see where we want to rhyme in its eternally moving poem? To understand what comes first is to try and see where we stand in this world.

We personally can say, after looking at our works and what we've become after this intense week, that we weren't afraid. We weren't afraid of getting lost in the maze of answers, of stumbling in the darkness. We looked into darkness and let our eyes adjust to see what it reflected back to us. We looked at the running clock and picked up our tools and made something. We had the honesty to listen to one another, and in turn to be listened to. We dared to open eyes, hearts and ears. And we can only hope we never lose the bravery of these days.

To futures yet to build, to changes yet to be made.

Alice Mezzanotte

Lola Oluwadare

Editors in Chief

Curatorial statement

We came here for a multitude of different reasons, but with the same aim: to enrich our personal development. We arrived thinking that we could develop our critical thinking independently and individually. After seven days spent sharing and discussing in a circle, we became a tight group. We shaped a small, self-conscious and extemporaneous community, which nevertheless holds the potential to change the world forever.

With this exhibition, we want to say that starting from small things we can go far. Learning, love, dialogue, awareness, relationships, intimacy, the body, time, choice, those who come last, to be a good artist, an idea, us, listening, cultural engagement, experience and self-awareness are those little things that, for us, come first. Each work has had a profound gestation, related to the most intimate sphere of each of us. What we are presenting here is a mirror of our doubts and needs, which are always linked to a present that we are going through, and therefore building. We are about to enter the dark forest together. Or are we already lost?

At every moment of our existence we make decisions. These are like points in a line—infinite. Ours, however, is a curved, closed line: a circle. We are perpetually dying and blossoming again, at the same time. We are constantly changing, like torrents of mountains. In every circle there is neither an end nor a beginning. And the river does not die when it flows into the sea, it does not spring from the glacier, but changes dancing in a circle.

Stanislao Satta

Matteo Zoccolo

Curators

for **Ali Ahmand Rahgozar**, what comes first is **learning**.

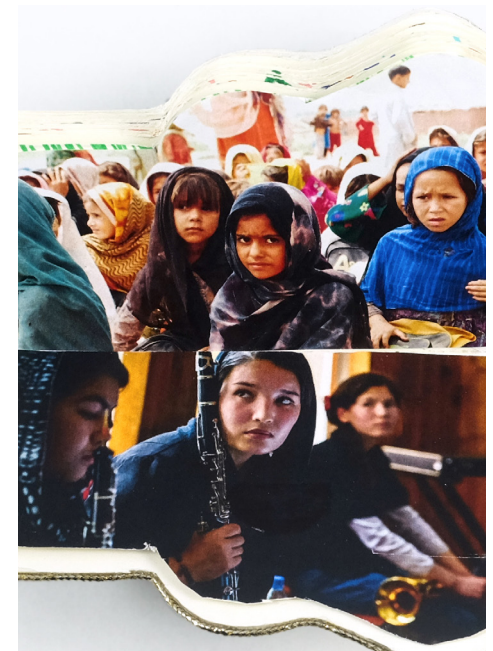
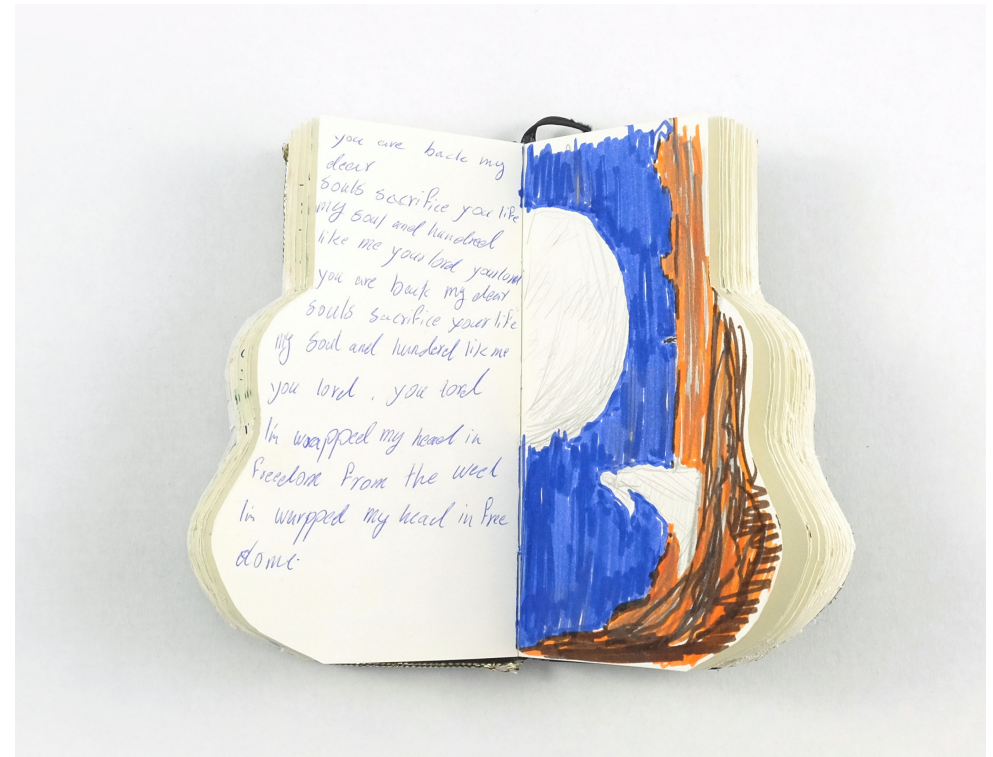
Nottar

The idea of Nottar came from combining a notebook and a guitar. There are different genres of Afghani music inside Nottar. There are lyrics from songs, the names of their singers and there is a drawing for each song which has been made by people while listening to it and trying to represent it with colours.

Many people believe that music and painting have little in common but reality is something else. The two are closely related. The environment in which music and visual art take place affects our creative process. Environmental factors such as colour, light or dark, smells and sounds stimulate a variety of emotions and feelings in us. In the same way, these carnal experiences enter the process of our creativity and affect our works of art.



I spent my life in Afghanistan until 2021 when I came to Italy. I started learning music when I was ten. Ostad Ahmad Rauofe Fateh Ali Khan was my first teacher. He taught me tabla and harmonium and later on I started learning to sing. I then studied composition at Isfahan University of Arts, Iran. When I was teaching in Afghanistan, the Taliban took power. There was no place for me there, and I was inevitably forced to leave my country. Now I have a new life, new great friends and I will use the power of music against oppression.



for **Alice Mezzanotte**,
what comes first is **love**.

***You're all I have
to stand on***

A knife and a notebook entwined, leaning onto each other. Eternal embrace of pain, but together they keep standing up. To put something first can hurt. To hold on to something can be painful. What would you allow to cut your body open? Who would you want to be holding the knife?



I am a storyteller and filmmaker. Most likely to be dwelling in foggy fields and similar places.
I love my cat.



for **Brixhilda Shqalsi**,
what comes first is **dialogue**.

Good news from Hell

Good news from Hell is an imaginary magazine for kids from 2030 that publishes news each month asking readers to come up with a graphic solution. This work is about the urge to change the educational system in order to free the people from the lie that they don't have power over what's happening around the world. To do this, we must first ask questions and then give ourselves the opportunity to answer them as if we had all the time in the world. A bit like children immersed in their games.

I never knew how beautiful my voice was until I sang for someone.



for **Francesca Fenaroli**, what comes first is **awareness**.

In order to step into the future

In order to step into the future you need to face the past. Francesca's notebook takes the form of a multi-material pastiche scattered with words from different newspapers and information sources, meant to be experienced in both a visual and a tactile way in its six parts. This project explores the concept of roots and origins, connecting nature and nurture in both a personal and a collective scope. It is inspired by the traditional tools of a working class family and the need for environmental consciousness in the face of technology and progress. This piece tackles the hard challenge of choosing what to keep and what to ditch from our origins without forgetting them or getting trapped in them, in order to be able to build our new way forward.



Francesca Fenaroli is a mistress of words and a creature of her time. You can find her wherever contradiction lies, trying to turn the Internet into a library or sitting under a tree in a polluted city, staring at the sun while the world burns. Class of 1997, she holds a Master's degree in Publishing with a focus on digital media and tech and is on her way to becoming a journalist.



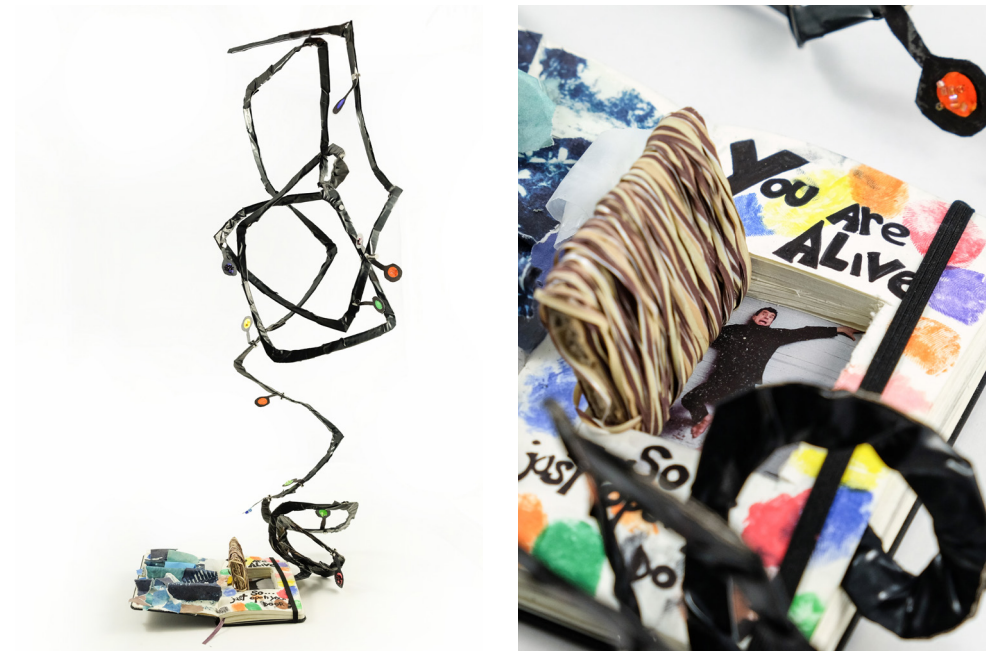
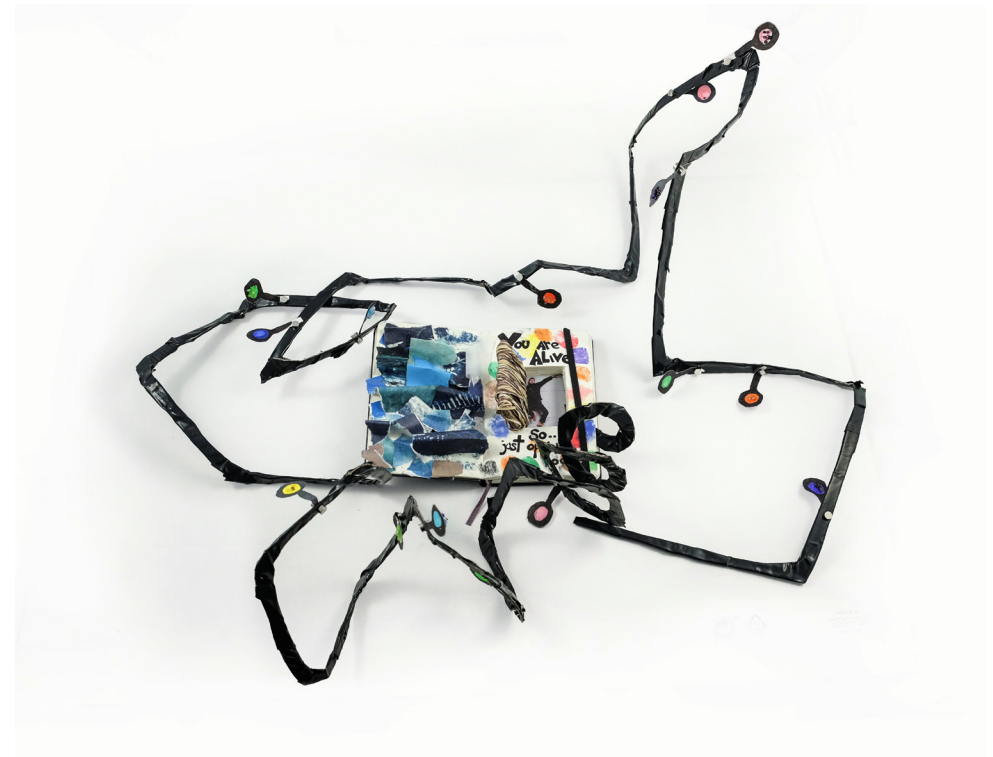
for **Gaia Dello Ioio**, what comes first are **relationships.**

Feeling ALIVE

I believe that feeling alive is not just about existing and being happy, I consider it a state of consciousness that makes you feel involved. It is something that gives you the power to “open the door” to other people and expand your horizons. In my work I decided to use magnets because magnetism is the engine of our planet. The magnets represent humans and each one has different colors because we are all the same but at the same time we all have different perceptions and backgrounds. The black road that connects the magnets shows that we are part of the same “game”.

My artwork is the result of a week of dialogue, comparisons, and exchanges through which I understood how to unlock my creativity. The colored fingerprints around the door belong to my travelling companions. Thank you for helping me understand my soul.

My name is Gaia and I have always considered myself a citizen of the world rather than an “Italian girl”. I am the kind of person that always tries to follow the positive light even during difficult times. Ever since I was a child I suffered from Wanderlust that awakened in me a strong desire for the unknown.

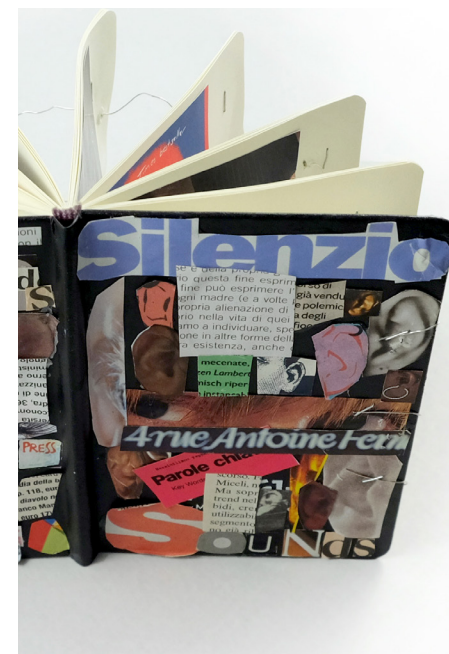
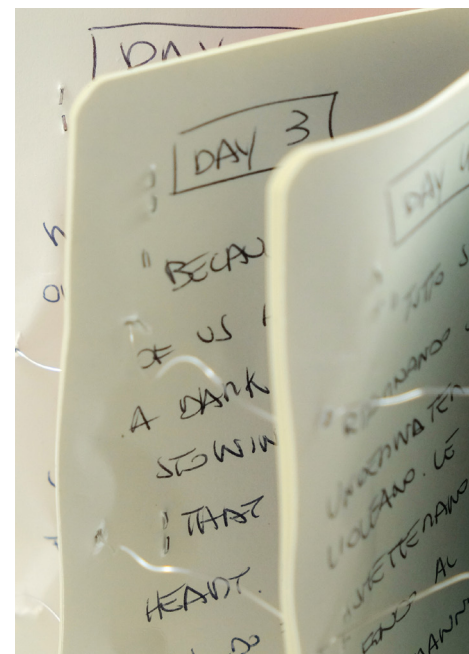


for **Gaia Ortona**,
what comes first is **intimacy**.

**Spreading you open
is the only way
of knowing you**

To me intimacy is an act of self-awareness: it leads you to discover what you like and puts you in a position to be audacious enough to share it. By being intimate with yourself, you can create great connections with others (symbolised by the wires) and people can see a little bit of themselves in you. This work is based on an idea that I had for a podcast about books and ASMR, so the message I want to get through is that sounds and words are tools with which it is possible to create strong bonds.

I love talking about books almost as much as I love reading them, but don't worry I will not be a bitch about it.



for **Giulia Ferrara**,
what comes first is **the body**.

**Ricettario illustrato
per il teatro**

This piece wants to investigate the power of theatre and the creation/remediation of matter. The fire represents transformation and the capability to change both ourselves and what's around us. The compost is there to remind us of the importance of procedures, processes, time and the fact that we are "the other" (plants, machines, animals). There is no/body in the room. We can and we must create our future, something that is not here yet, using what we have now, like alchemists.



Half Italian, half Uruguayan. Studying theatre and performing arts in Venice made me discover exciting scenarios, both visually and mentally stimulating. I graduated in Dec. 2021 with the thesis "Autonomy of mutant bodies: self production and social space in the MWC" investigating reuse, cyberpunk as an affirmative practice and cyber-bodies. I draw and do lino-prints. I also write about comics.



for **Leta Gallo**, what comes first is **time**.

Dis United Kingdom of Great Britain

The work represents what comes first to me—Time. The concept is to concretize the life journey. To embark on this journey you need a passport. With it you can travel in time and cross lines and borders. By crossing the lines you will go against something and someone, and you will know people and yourself. “Disunited” stands for a community of disgration and explosion, because Britain gives and takes culture and identity as a commodity. This creates new challenges and opportunities that you can take part in or waste, but only before your passport expires.



My name is Leta Gallo, heir to war children. I was born in Ethiopia, in Sebeta and grew up in Milan. I have been living and studying in London for 4 years. My childhood made me think that art was a waste of time, because I thought we should spend time doing more concrete things. But I always had in mind to change the world. Today I see in art the only way to be free, and creativity as a means to unlock things and to get rid of beliefs and chains that keep us tied to the boxes of certain geographical areas or cultures.



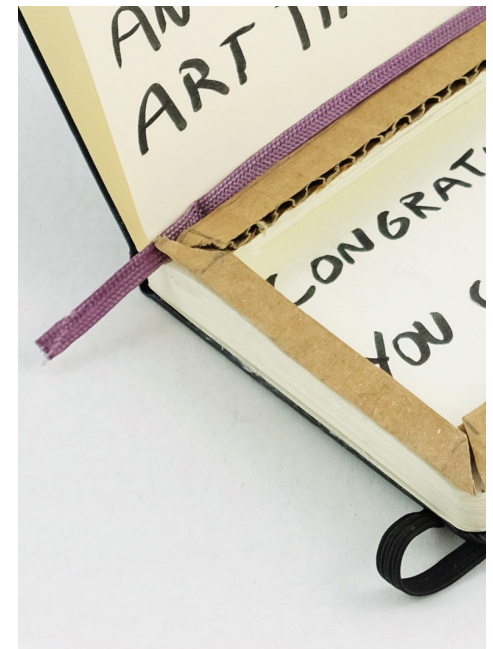
for **Lodovico Matteus Da Pra Galanti**,
what comes first is **choice**.

Are you an art thief?

I want to remind us all that life gives us options. Whether we are aware of these or not and whether we decide to do something or not, we are always making a choice.



Lodovico is a soon to be Jiu-Jitsu instructor. He recently decided to leave Milan where he has been living for all of his life and to move to Florida where he will find his future, and some alligators.



for **Lola Oluwadare**,
what comes first are **those who**
come last.

Mario or Lola?

An Italian ID whose owner you have to guess: Mario or Lola? The first pages alternate images of white men and black queer people. The last pages are the inside of Mario Rossi's ID that you can slide like a pop-up book to find the inside of Lola Oluwadare's ID. One day, during the workshop, we were asked what our dream was and I ironically answered, as I often do, that I would like to navigate the world like a mediocre white cishet man. The assumption behind this piece is the fear that I will not be given the same opportunities as my counterpart, the lack of desire to do the "double work" and a reminder to myself that I'm always the white man for someone else.



Not a mass murderer.



for **Lucrezia Costa**, what comes first is **to be a good artist.**

To whom it may concern

What is under the ground is hidden at first sight and so it's somehow protected, or forgotten. How is life under the most superficial surface? Why do we, as humans, bury both what we fear and wish to forget, and what we love and wish to save? These thoughts came out while working on the question: "What comes first?"

I wanted to answer this by archiving inside my notebook something I wanted to leave behind, metaphorically "under the ground". The piece is both a coffin and a folder holding something inside that can't be seen anymore. It is classified as an archive document with an anonymous tally.



Ever since I decided to enter inside Dante's "Selva Oscura", I understood that I am an artist but first of all I am an uncomfortable crack. My artistic formation and the pandemic emergency accelerated the process, like an earthquake that generates fractures in a solid wall. I am exploring depths and crossroads born inside a rupture that is constantly changing and deepening. With my practice I try to bring out to the surface pieces of what I found in the abyss to create shock waves.



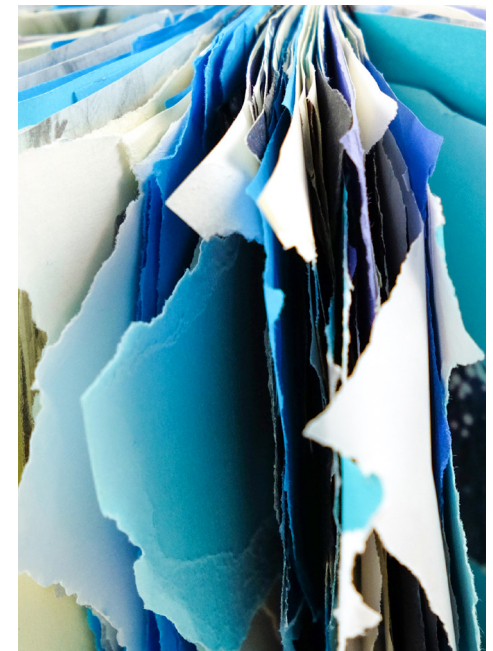
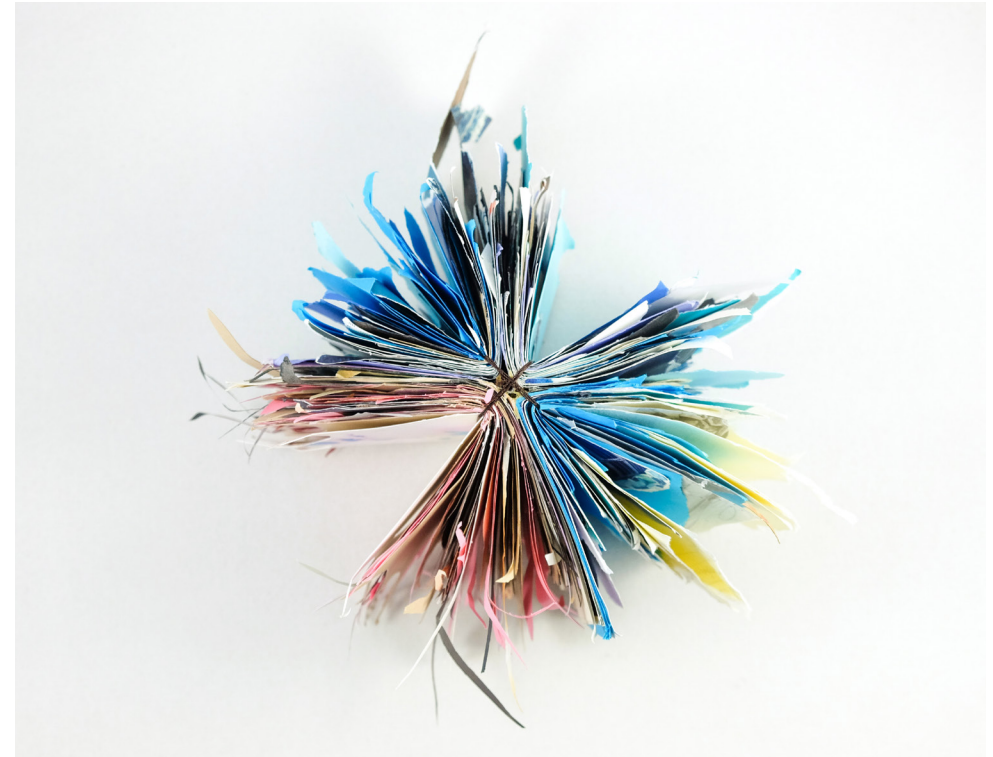
for **Marta Lucia Sosio**, what comes first is **an idea**.

Nothing **(Or Everything?)**

I created this piece starting from the sentence: "Men and Ocean. Impetuous, deep and never the same". I was inspired by an abstract picture that I took when I went to Australia. I saw in it both elements of man and ocean. I also implemented the object of the bicycle wheel, a continuous cycle but yet never the same. In the process of making this project I experimented with materials such as coloured papers, sketches, threads, sheets, magazines, concentrating mainly on colours and shapes. Humanity is represented by pink and brown, the human shapes are made with a cutter, so their borders are well defined. While the Ocean is made out of shades of blue, and their cuts are born by chance. The structure is cyclical, there is no real beginning or end. Everything is a becoming, a change, a transformation.



She is a disaster in all aspects, she lives of air, incomprehensible languages and unexpected moments that make her travel / get lost constantly. She graduated in "Illustration and Animation" at IED, Milan in 2020. Her research is focused on immersing the viewer into their own multifaceted world, on not explaining too much (because an emotion should not be explained) and on making invisible what is visible to sensitive souls and explorers. She is in search of an order inside an undefined chaos.



for **Marvin Gabriele Nwachukwu**, what comes first is **us**.

Fair Play

I created a functioning oracle clearly inspired by the vintage “Magic 8 Ball” toy. A practical handle on the side bears my motto: young, black and dangerous. This kind of object recalls the need to dare during the practice of imagining the future and creating the present.

Instead of a collection of generic answers, the AtWork oracle contains a choral response to a single question: What comes first? Just like the process that led to my creation, multiple answers were given in a collective manner by the group of participants.



Marvin Gabriele Nwachukwu (1996) is a visual artist born in Sesto San Giovanni, nearby Milan, where he is now based. His research highlights continuous contaminations between disciplines and cultures. Although his practice spaces between different mediums, such as print, photography and video, he's keen on graphic and editorial outputs. In his perspective the context in which he operates is always relevant: sensitivity and proximity to the communities are crucial to the creative process.



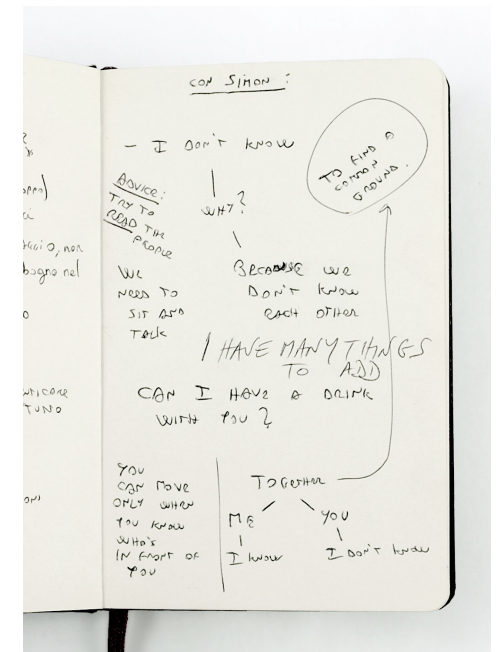
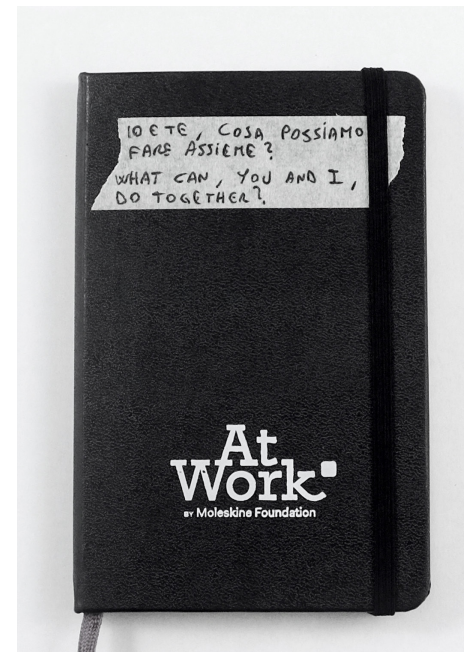
for **Matteo Zoccolo**, what comes first is **listening**.

**what can, you and I,
do together?**

Over the course of four days, I asked 80 people what we could do together, and collaboratively collected traces of each encounter by taking notes in a notebook. In an attempt to give concrete form to a vision for our future, I decided to show myself vulnerable and in need of the other, urgently shedding light on what concerns me most—what lies between you and I, our imaginative potential and agency. As a beautiful excuse to gather ideas and meet people, this performance certainly worked. Now that we have realized that “how?” and “with whom?” are much more interesting questions to ask, it is up to us to use the tools we have and do it together, now. This work is not a notebook, it is a way of hitchhiking and an underground fungus in the making—eventually, it will become a web.



Born in Italy not long before 2000, I want to give my contribution to a collective change using listening, art, pedagogy, space, self-reflection, dialogue and research as tools. After studying art in Bolzano and Jerusalem, I became aware of my agency. I decided to use my potential by working with people in order to provoke awareness, starting from small things and dreaming of shaping a global network of meaningful connections. I am looking forward to working with you.



for **Nan Chen**, what comes first is **cultural engagement**.

The "Voice"

A voice deserves a chance to be heard and respected. Where does the voice come from? Who is speaking? Who is listening? Who are we ignoring? I am focusing on the voice of Italy: a multicultural community, a multi-immigrant context, which may come with its faults and problems. Giving more possibilities to voices also gives more possibilities to eliminate cultural biases. The way we deal with voices is becoming more and more important in this world. Each page of this book represents a relationship between cities and people. It is run through by a thread, so by following it you can choose with which relationship you want to combine and communicate, or to remain independent. On the other hand, this thread gives this book (community) an open state. The varied openings represent different windows and opportunities that a voice can unlock.



Nan is a Chinese designer who has lived in the United States and Europe. Experiencing different cultures has given her a peculiar understanding of community and diversity.



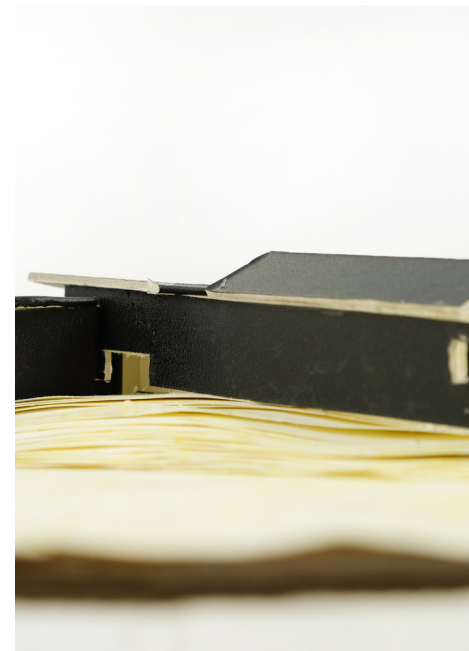
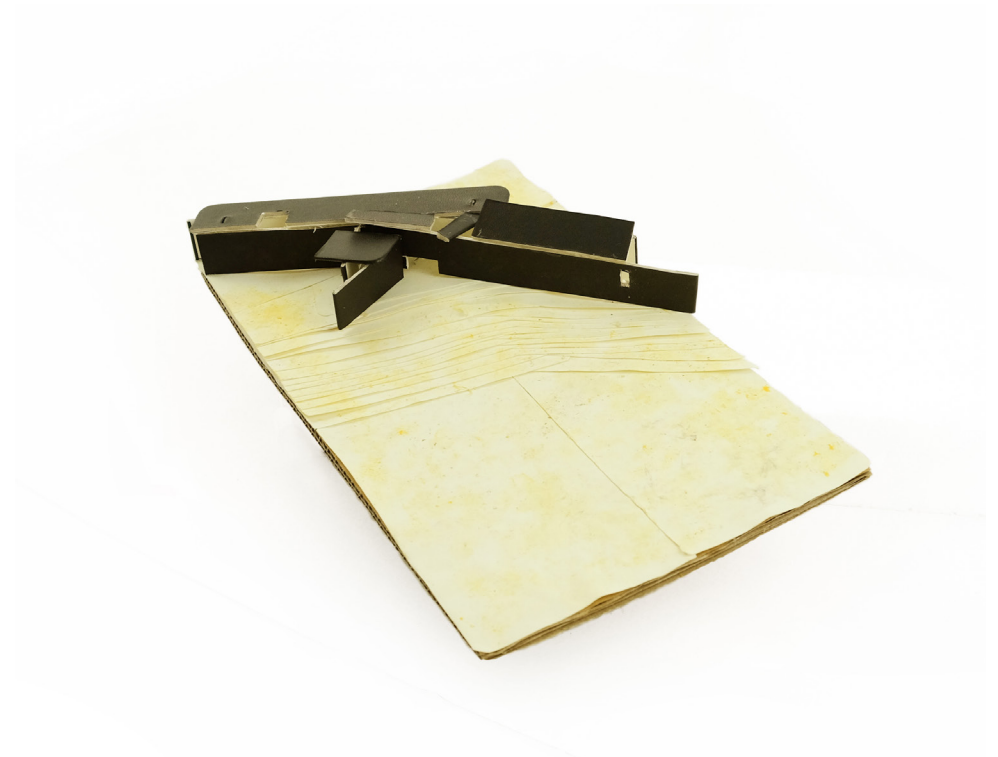
for **Stanislao Satta**, what comes first is **experience**.

The smell of the stairs of my grandmother's house when I was a child

One morning, years ago, a few weeks after my grandmother left me, I was climbing the black wrought iron spiral staircase. I stopped and realised that I no longer remembered her smell. Before reaching that step, despite the fact that she had been reunited with the earth for several weeks, I was sure that I could check for her smell and be able to recognize it. But now that she was dead, my memory would have been deprived of it forever and I would never have been able to recognize the smell of my grandmother ever again, to burst into tears and throw myself into her arms. The pages became dunes and waves, memories of my inner landscape. I walk a long corridor, where time works freely and corrodes the structure. There is no internal or external. And the mandarin smell emanating from the sand will soon disappear. In its place mold will grow.



I don't study, I don't work, I don't watch TV
I don't go to the cinema, I don't play sports.



for **Stefano Lago**,
what comes first is **self-**
awareness.

kroWtA. Who am I not?

Each of us has two faces: the good one and the evil one. If you don't know who you are, ask yourself: "Who am I not?".

kroWtA is the game that allows you to meet the Evil You. Because if you know the best version of yourself, you'll probably reach it. But if you know the worst version of you, you'll surely avoid it.

I am a pragmatic humanist. Ambition is my engine.
Words are my fuel.



Contributions

AtWork Milan
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Workshop Conductor
Simon Njami

AtWork Program Director
Elena Korzhenevich

Editors in Chief
Alice Mezzanotte
Lola Oluwadare

Graphic Designer
Matteo Zoccolo

Photographer
Raffaele Bellezza

Curators
Stanislao Satta
Matteo Zoccolo

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Thanks

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