Moleskine Foundation presents “Where is South?”
Redefining the word “South” for a new generation, the virtual exhibit showcases 90 notebooks transformed into powerful artworks by young creatives from three continents.

More than 90 young artists from Gabon, Mozambique, the UK, USA, and refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants living in Italy have liberated the word “south” from ideology and invested it with personal meaning as part of “Where is South?,” a virtual exhibit presented by the Moleskine Foundation.

The exhibit will take over the Moleskine Foundation Instagram page from October 1 through October 30, 2020.

The online exhibition encourages viewers to examine the collective understanding of “the Global South”; is the term a political statement, a way of ordering regions of the world in opposition to each other, a shortcut for labelling one part of the planet inferior, less developed, or impoverished? The works are the creative outcomes of the Foundation’s AtWork initiative, an itinerant educational workshop designed to unlock the creative potential of young people through critical thinking and intense debate. The workshops are led by Moleskine Foundation advisor and AtWork co-creator Simon Njami, the influential author and curator of contemporary art.

“No matter where we are in the world, there is always a south,” said Njami. “These young people reclaimed their power to define the word as a very intimate notion that varies according to the place where they are and where they want to reach. The exhibit powerfully reveals that there cannot be any South without the gaze we invest it with.”

Showcasing more than 90 Moleskine notebooks that have been hacked, decorated, and transformed into artworks, the exhibit redefines the ideologically charged phrase at a moment when people are debating how to create a more equitable society in a COVID-19 world. Using paint, collage, scissors, wires, chains, and more, the AtWork participants created artworks that challenge notions of independence, identity, borders, and history. The participants, who are all between the ages of 18 and 27, include emerging choreographers, entrepreneurs, curators, photographers, NGO founders, poets, and more.

Frank Noel Makosso (Libreville, Gabon), *How to express the ineffable?* Courtesy of Moleskine Foundation Collection.

“How to express the ineffable?” by Frank Noel Makosso (Libreville, Gabon): A poetry slam champion from Gabon, Makosso described his South as his “inner self.” For his artwork, he cut French and English words and phrases from newspapers and magazines and pasted them together to create a striking collage of new phrases and meanings. His notebook is made of wood slats painted black and bound together with twine.
Dalaeja Foreman (New York, USA), *Been Workin’: A toolkit for the possibilities of potential*. Courtesy of Moleskine Foundation Collection.

“Been Workin’: A toolkit for the possibilities of potential” by Dalaeja Foreman (New York, USA): A community organizer, curator, first-generation Caribbean-American, and Brooklyn native, Foreman describes her South as “linked potentialities and mutual thriving.” Her notebook, inspired by block parties in reclaimed and underused spaces with great potential for liberation, evokes the strategies for resistance that exist in working-class and working-poor communities of colour and Black communities. For her artwork, she used a variety of mediums, including seashells, fabrics, and twine, to create a unique composition on every page.
Liryc Dela Cruz (Venice, Italy), *Memories of the Storm and the Forgotten Period.*
Courtesy of Moleskine Foundation Collection.

“Memories of the Storm and the Forgotten Period” by Liryc Dela Cruz (Venice, Italy): A filmmaker from the Southern Philippines, Dela Cruz describes his South as “rebirth.” For his artwork, Dela Cruz wove red threads through the pages of his notebook, with several vibrant colours of thread twining together on the final page.

“AtWork was phenomenal in that it taught me to deconstruct the received ideas of society, to leave the boundaries of the format within which I had constrained my creativity, a conventional format that in my opinion limits us a bit,” said Makosso. “I am learning to respect the rules that already exist, but also to redefine things according to the expression of my thought; which allows me to believe but above all to think.”

“Our goal is to create a welcoming and creative space where young people can think differently, get out of their comfort zones, and are free to question the society around them,” said Adama Sanneh, CEO of the Moleskine Foundation. “Participants are empowered with the self-confidence and self-awareness needed to spur positive change in their communities.”

“Where is South?” builds on the Moleskine Foundation’s mission to support the development of creative communities around the world. The Foundation uses unconventional educational tools and experiences to unlock the creative potential of young people, especially from underserved communities, ensuring an inclusive approach to its beneficiaries.

“Where is South?” will kick off on October 1st at 5:00 PM CET and 11:00 AM EST with a live virtual conversation with AtWork participants and partners, who will discuss the power of creativity to transform lives and community. “Where is South?” is co-presented with partners who co-created the workshop experience in each country including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Venice, Italy as part of “Rothko in Lampedusa” exhibition; the Young People’s Programme at Tate Modern in London, UK; Pfwura Ndzilo and ANIMA in Maputo, Mozambique; ONG Mukasa, Institut Français Gabon, and Musée National des Arts et Traditions du Gabon in Libreville, Gabon; and The Africa Center in New York City, USA.