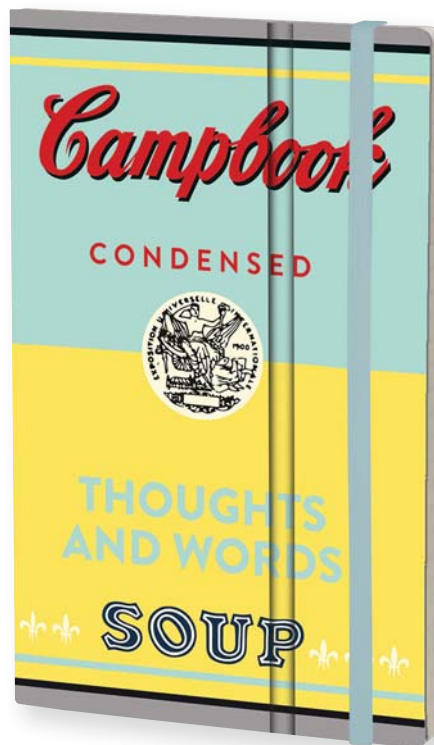


Stifflex: Style Meets Substance

BY NICKY PESSAROFF

Traditional Italian paper making and U.S. pop culture are equally represented in Mazzuoli 3•6•5 notebooks.



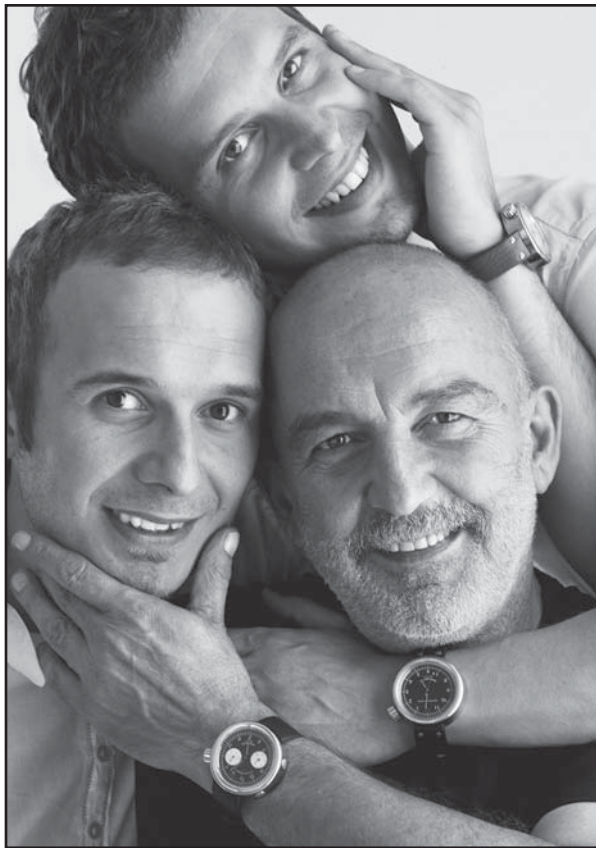
From left—the Mazzuoli 3•6•5 Stifflex Fluo Marilyn in orange/fuchsia and Campbook Thoughts and Words notebooks are inspired by the art of Andy Warhol; the Art Hopper Stifflex notebook is inspired by Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks*. The double indentation on these covers allows for some flexibility despite the fact that the notebooks are hardcover.

Emiliano Mazzuoli is the third generation of Mazzuolis—along with his brother, Tommaso—to help run his family's eponymous paper and writing instrument company. Ask him if the Mazzuoli company is influenced by the Tuscan region of Italy it has called home since its founding in 1949, and the answer you receive will be poetic.

"Our company is situated in Barberino Tavarnelle between Florence and Siena," Emiliano says. "The town dates back to the time of the Roman Empire. It was where travelers changed horses and rested on their trips from Florence to Siena on their way to Rome. From the windows of our offices we can see vineyards where some of the most prestigious wines in Italy are grown. Every small town or village on the hills around us has a story to tell. Every day we breathe in the beauty that is around us, and it influences everything we do."

This magazine often covers the rich writing instrument tradition of central Italy's Tuscan region. The cities of Florence, Pisa, and Siena are located there, and the famed wine called Chianti is grown there. The region was home to the lost civilization of the Etruscans, whose rich culture was likely incorporated into greater Roman society. During medieval times, Tuscany—and specifically Florence—was the seat of the Italian Renaissance. And after World War II, people thronged the streets to welcome the conquering U.S. Army, looked upon as liberators by the Tuscan people.

One of those individuals was Angelo Mazzuoli, a native of Florence who made a living as a bicycle mechanic. By 1949, this entrepreneurial individual noticed a marketing vacuum in his city. Old and new businesses were coming back online, all in need of commercial printing, so Angelo purchased the region's first automatic printing machines.



Above—photograph by Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani of Tommaso, Emiliano, and Giuliano Mazzuoli.
Right, from top—the Mazzuoli factory c. 1957; Mazzuoli graphic designers use analog and digital design techniques; Mazzuoli printing machines in production.

Within a few years of its founding, the Mazzuoli printing company was producing paper accessories and refills for major Italian fashion brands. Angelo's son, Giuliano, took over from his father, and in 1982 he founded the imprint Mazzuoli 3•6•5 to sell agendas and planners.

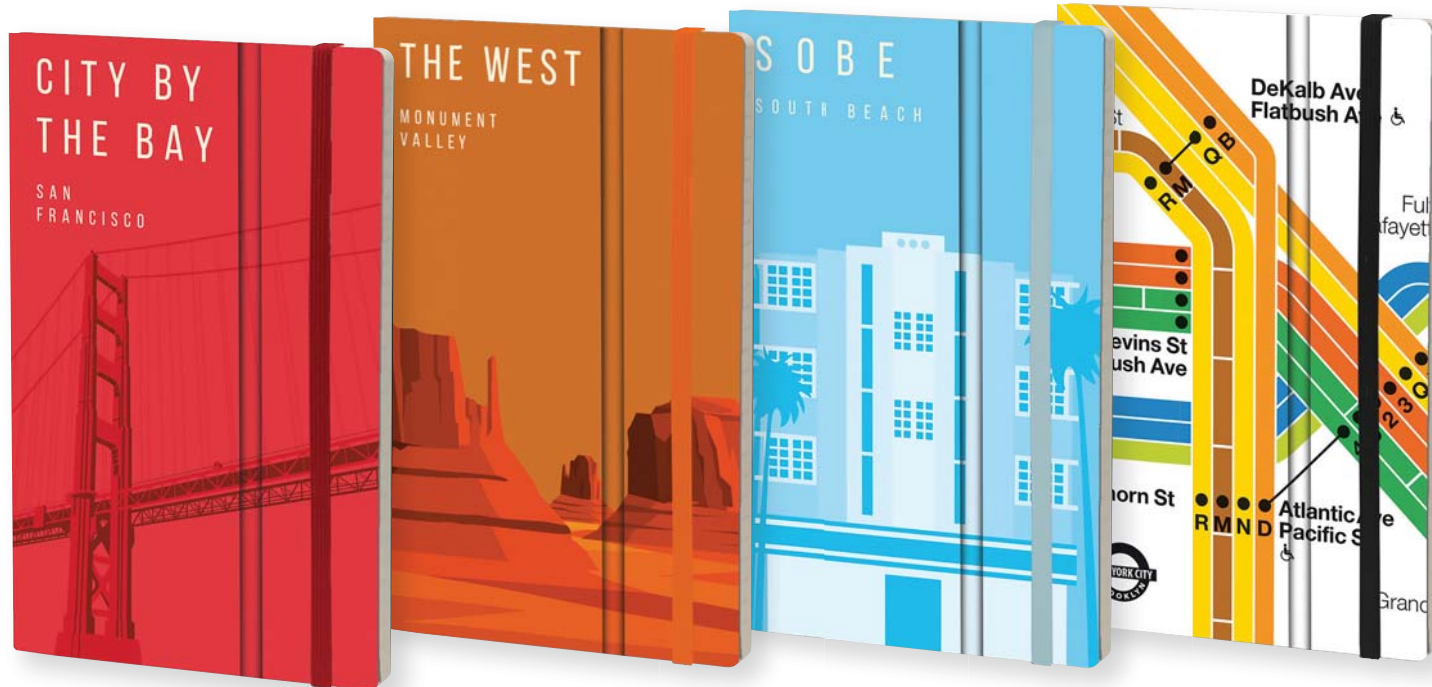
It's little surprise that Giuliano soon expanded into writing instruments, especially considering that he carried fond memories of playing with the tools in the workshop of his father's bicycle business. The Mazzuoli Officina line of aluminum-bodied, precision-machined writing instruments and accessories is directly inspired by those tools. (For more on those writing instruments, see our cover story from the April 2020 issue of *Pen World*.)

Since Mazzuoli's founding in 1949, much has changed, but much hasn't. Mazzuoli still makes exceptional paper products, pays close attention to graphic printing, and maintains a uniquely close relationship with U.S. popular culture.

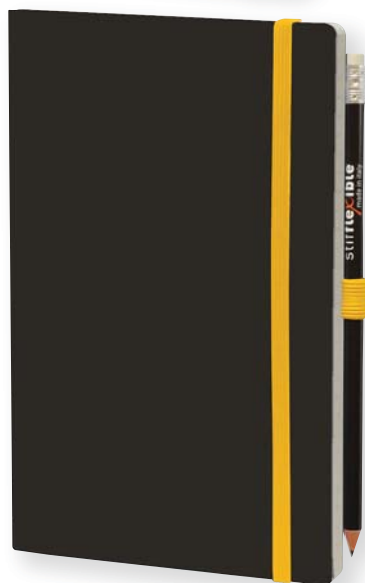
Emiliano says, "Mazzuoli is an artisanal company, and every piece that comes out of our production is the fruit of the passion of our people to create products with a high standard of craftsmanship passed down through the generations."

Sometimes, that standard of craftsmanship is centuries old. The inspiration for the Stifflex line of notebooks came during a consultation by Giuliano with a Florentine museum on a book that dated back to around 1700.





Above—the Stifflex Alias series features city and skylscapes of San Francisco, California, Monument Valley at the Arizona-Utah border, and Miami, Florida’s South Beach; Mazzuoli Underground series notebook of the Brooklyn, New York City subway map.
Left—Yellow and black Mazzuoli 3•6•5 Stiff Basic hardcover notebooks and matching pencils.



“The precious volume had a sturdy, hard, leather cover that was able to hold its contents over time and was easy to consult because the hard cover was also flexible,” Emiliano says. “Inspired by this system, Giuliano modernized and patented the system, applied it to notebooks, and called it Stifflex.”

Mazzuoli 3•6•5 Stifflex hardcover notebooks have two vertical indents that allow users to bend the cover without breaking—an ideal system for flipping through pages of writing quickly. The inside-back-cover features a flap that both seals a document holder pocket and acts as a bookmark. Stifflex notebooks also have an elastic enclosure band and include a ruler.

Stifflex notebooks come in sizes of small (3.5 x 5.5 in.), medium (5.1 x 8.25 in.), large (6 x 8.25 in.) and extra-large (7.5 x 10 in.). All notebooks have 80 gsm uncoated, ivory-colored paper. Small notebooks have 144 pages total, 96 of which are lined, 32 blank, and 16 graphed. Other notebook sizes have 192 pages total, of which 144 are lined, 32 blank, and 16 graphed. All graph paper is perforated.

The paper used in Mazzuoli products is meant for serious use whether sketching, note taking, or journaling. Its thickness and opacity prevent bleedthrough even with a stub nib. Although uncoated, the paper is remarkably smooth, allowing the nib to glide across the page.

“Paper is one of the most beautiful elements ever invented,” Emiliano says. “Like cats have nine lives, paper can be recycled infinitely. Paper, in all of its uses, is one of the best products ever invented, and there will be a new appreciation for it in the future.”

To help ensure that future, all Mazzuoli 3•6•5 products are FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified. All paper products meet the standards of eco-sustainability.

“Even the ‘Leather-like’ material we use [in the Basic line of hardcover notebooks] is nothing more than paper that is stamped and waxed in such a way as to give it a leather-like look,” Emiliano says. “We receive a lot of feedback from people who use our products, and we know they appreciate the fact that it is FSC certified.”



Left to right—Mazzuoli 3•6•5 Stifflex Vintage Surfing series Adventure Green and Surf Rider Blue notebooks; Urban series New York City notebook; Historical Notes series “I have a dream” limited edition notebook.

Customers also appreciate the colorful and varied graphics available in the Stifflex line. Subway stations and cities around the globe, animals and fruit, distressed flags and pop art...the collection list is long. Further, the color saturation and image precision on a Mazzuoli 3•6•5 notebook are across-the-board exceptional. The Mazzuolis credit that to their generations of experience in the printing business and their close work with leading brands on personalized, business-to-business products.

“Thanks to them, we are in touch with graphic design of a high level, and this allows us to study the next trends and develop our products. We have a team of five graphics people who develop the final product after a careful selection process. The objective of the project team is to make something original that distinguishes itself from other products already on the market,” Emiliano says.

Another striking element of these Italian notebooks is how many covers are influenced by U.S. culture. The Alias series of cityscape covers have honored not just New York and Los Angeles but also San Francisco, Honolulu, Miami, and Monument Valley on the Arizona-Utah border. Prints inspired by Andy Warhol are numerous. A print of Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks* is especially striking. Mazzuoli 3•6•5 also has a robust collection of vintage surfing and gasoline graphics.

The Mazzuolis believe there is a mutual cultural respect between the United States and Italy. “I suppose it goes back to the time of the Second World War when American soldiers were seen as the liberators from fascism and the U.S. Army represented a symbol of liberty. So much is this true that we even dedicated a pen in the Officina Special Edition series to the U.S. Army,” Emiliano says. “We see the fact that Americans appreciate Italy from the thousands of American students who come to Florence every year to study and immerse themselves in the Italian Renaissance. Americans seem to appreciate Italian family values and lifestyle.”

Emiliano cites North America as one of Mazzuoli’s largest markets along with Europe, Japan, and South Korea. Mazzuoli also notes that its relationship with its U.S. distributor, Creative Art Materials, is a perfect match: a focus on high-quality, ecologically-responsible products and a retail experience based on in-person interaction. After all, a Mazzuoli notebook is meant to be used.

In the present, the Mazzuoli family is hard at work making an exceptional product under the new rules of life. And the next generation of Mazzuolis, Emiliano and Tommaso, have dreams that rival their father’s and grandfather’s—their own twist on the American Dream, in fact.

“I believe that when a business does well in a certain country that it’s only right to open a factory in that country,” Emiliano says. “I don’t know what will happen in the future, but if our business becomes strong enough in the United States, it’s only right to open a production facility there, bring our know-how there, and give jobs to Americans. It would be my dream to do this.”

Visit shop.mazzuoli.it.

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