

Happy Anniversary, Stylus!

Stylus

A New Generation

DAVID OSCARSON

Tree of Life



Celebrating
Two Decades
Visconti's Bible
Collection

▶ **Get Out and Vote**
Pens touch history

▶ **Dressed to Dazzle**
Vintage Waterman



(table of contents)

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2008 • NUMBER 31



48

Features

32 | **Hand on the Bible**

Visconti celebrates 20 years

48 | **Unlimited Creativity**

Montegrappa's newest

62 | **A Family Affair**

Atelier Simoni speaks to luxury

64 | **The Politics of Pens**

Touching history

32



(table of contents)

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2008 • NUMBER 31

Short Features

- 40** | **Lessons to Learn Part II**
My visit to the Nakaya pen company
- 54** | **What Is It? Part II**
Pen look-alikes are on point
- 68** | **Confessions of a Parker Pen Addict**
Tale of a Ribbon Pen



40

20



departments

- 3 Editor's Note
- 4 Technical Editor's Note
- 10 Ask Stylus
- 14 News
- 18 Market
- 70 Travel
- 74 Road Test
- 78 To the Point
- 80 Collecting
- 88 Classifieds
- 92 Contact Information
- 94 Crossword Puzzle
- 95 Postscript

HAND ON

the Bible

Visconti celebrates 20 years

BY NANCY OLSON

“My interest in starting a pen company was, above all, about my passion for pens,” says Dante Del Vecchio of the decision to launch Visconti in 1988. He and Luigi Poli, who retired from Visconti in 2006, were collectors of vintage writing instruments and friends first. But the two thought something was missing in the offerings of the then-existing pen companies—and perhaps they could help. In their opinion, there was little they would

consider as coveted collectibles of tomorrow. “The last pen I’d loved was the Sheaffer Snorkel [introduced in 1952],” Del Vecchio says. But now, as the company celebrates twenty years in business, it seems that Visconti has set the world of writing instruments on end, offering exciting pens for everyday use and limited editions that would make any collector proud.

Manufacturing, design and pens have been in the respective

bloodlines of the partners for at least two generations. “My father had a large window frame factory in Italy, and my grandfather was a [metal] sculptor who won awards for his works in the 1920s and ’30s in Paris and Rome,” says Del Vecchio, whose wife Carla is also instrumental in the company’s pen designs. “Luigi’s father, Guglielmo, spent 35 year at Pelikan [pen company] Italy, and it was he who encouraged us to use celluloid, ‘the queen of all materials.’”



The Bible Collection
includes both Christian Bible
and Jewish Bible versions.



It's no surprise, then, that the Florentine company's first pen collections were crafted exclusively from the queen herself. In 1988 and 1989, Visconti produced a collection of fountain pens and ballpoints in six colors of celluloid. In 1991, the celluloid Ragtime collection of fountain pens, ballpoints and pencils was introduced to the world, and the following year, the limited edition Caravel was born. Just 500 pieces each, Caravel was introduced in red, blue and brown celluloid. Also in 1992, the growing firm obtained three patents: one for a traveling ink pot, one for the chemical composition of the ink pellets it employed, and one for a Visconti-brand inkwell. With no time to waste and a whole continent to enthrall, the lapis celluloid Voyager with its unique filling system was brought exclusively to the North American market in 1993 as Visconti expanded global distribution.

One of the earlier celluloid pens that garnered worldwide acclaim for its purpose, design and filling system was the Uffizi. Introduced worldwide in 1994, the teal-colored pen came in two ver-

sions: a limited edition of 500 each with a sterling or vermeil filigree overlay, or a Special Reserve of 50 sets of four pens, which included the aforementioned, as well as two pens with solid overlays—one in sterling and one in vermeil, also over teal-colored celluloid. The pens were intended to commemorate the Uffizi Museum in Florence, which was bombed by terrorists in May of 1993. A portion of the profits were donated by Visconti to the museum to aid its reconstruction. "The Uffizi is the oldest museum in the world and one of the most symbolic of Italian culture," says Del Vecchio. "Our idea [for the pen] was born a few days after the terrorism hit, and all aspects of the project were developed in one week."

And the momentum has never let up. Visconti pens are now available in 51 countries, and the line keeps growing. From the highly successful Opera collection to the annual Ponte Vecchio golf tournament limited edition, the range of products reassures anyone who thinks the company may be resting on its two-decades-long laurels. And Fine Writing, Inc., the New Jersey-based distributor of Visconti products in the United States

MUSIC AND WORDS

Montegrappa elevates the human spirit

BY NANCY OLSON



Montegrappa, based in Bassano del Grappa, Italy, has long been revered for its artistry, using fine writing instruments as its canvas. The company recently introduced two new limited edition pens that dazzle: Invito a La Traviata—an homage to the opera by Giuseppe Verdi, and the Paulo Coelho—dedicated to the well-known author and spiritualist. First introduced in Europe, both pens will soon be available in the United States.

La Traviata

With veritable Italian style and hospitality, guests of Montegrappa were treated to a performance of La Traviata at none other than the famed La Scala in Milan in June. The gathering of journalists and other special invitees from around the globe was hosted by Roberta Facciano, director of sales and marketing, in celebration of the new limited edition pen. La Traviata is one of the world's best-loved and most popular operas and was first performed in Venice in

“The pen is a musical instrument. Its sound can be heard when it touches the paper. —Paulo Coelho”



La Traviata with sterling silver overlay

1853 at the Teatro la Fenice. The title means, literally, “the woman who strayed,” and it’s the story of Violetta Valery, a courtesan, and Alfredo, her true love.

It was in the La Scala Museum, over cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, where we caught our first glimpse of the La Traviata fountain pen enthroned in a lighted vitrine—just minutes before curtain time for the eponymous opera. It was thrilling, to say the least. This fountain pen, the first of the Emozioni in Musica collection, is available in three versions: red celluloid with a sterling silver overlay (1,912 pieces), a solid

gold overlay (37 pieces), and a gold overlay with diamonds (16 pieces). Each portrays the lovely Violetta. The newly renovated La Scala maintains a museum on the premises, and it has an amazing collection of paintings, statues, costumes and other documents about La Scala’s history and opera in general.

The sterling silver image of Violetta is created on the pen using the burin engraving technique, for which Montegrappa is renowned. In the gold versions, her miniature portrait is rendered in enamel. The process is called “stove enameling,” a

multi-step process—using over 200 hues—that requires firing in a kiln at over 1,200 degrees. Violetta’s monogram decorates the 18-karat gold bi-color nib. The gold-and-diamond version features 32 princess-cut diamonds and two brilliant cut diamonds.

Paulo Coelho

The limited edition Paulo Coelho is a tribute to the personal and artistic journey of this renowned Brazilian writer, perhaps best known for his book *The Pilgrimage*. In it, he documents his own pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, Spain,



A FAMILY AFFAIR

Atelier Simoni speaks to

luxury

At right: Raffaella Simoni Malaguti and Gianluca Malaguti Simoni



BY NANCY OLSON

Family, creativity and quality are the abiding themes for the new Atelier Simoni collection of writing instruments and wood accessories. And the two principals of this exciting new venture are well-known within the realm of writing instruments. Raffaella Simoni Malaguti, president, is the daughter of Armando Simoni, the founder of the Bologna-based pen company Omas. Gianluca Malaguti Simoni, her son and business colleague for over twenty years, remains an integral creative force at Omas as executive director, in addition to his role as CEO at the Atelier. The two share more than simply a familial bond. It is obvious that a deep mutual respect exists between the two—for their work, aesthetic values and appreciation of tradition.

“This is a continuously evolving story which began in 1918 [date of the founding of Omas],” according to Mrs. Malaguti.

“And now, Atelier Simoni goes beyond pens. We are making use of our indisputable combination of technical and aesthetic experience to offer refined luxury products that anticipate our very special clients’ future needs.” And these needs are indeed very special and quite unique.

The Atelier’s collection of wood boxes includes those with a variety of esoteric purposes, including a temperature- and humidity-controlled chocolate box, an eyeglass case and an “empty pocket box”—perfect for the end of the day. There’s a caviar case crafted from crystal, silver and wood and a “good energy” box that is, when positioned properly to the north, said to create harmony in one’s life and, as its name implies, conjure harmonious vibrations. Among others, jewel and cufflink cases, currency cases, watch winders and humidors round out the mix. If you have a special request, one-of-a-kind cases may



“Armando Simoni began a tradition of unique creativity and a history of uninterrupted production, which in 2008 celebrates its ninetieth anniversary.”

—Raffaella Simoni Malaguti



Rare and beautiful woods are used to create the boxes.

be commissioned to the specifications of the customer.

Rare and beautiful woods, such as ebony, bubinga and elm—over 100 varieties in all—are used to create the boxes, each of which is hand polished no less than four times. Exquisite inlays adorn some of them, and the mirror finish brings out the grain to perfection. There are three distinct lines within the selection: the IO, the Art de Vivre, and the Invisible—distinguished by the monogram “AS” for Armando Simoni.

With the duo’s long history in pen making, it wouldn’t seem appropriate to not include a pen within the Atelier’s range of offerings. But no ordinary pen would suffice. The revolutionary ID collection has elegant and classic clean lines, with technology that is cutting edge. It addresses the problem of leakage due to such things as variations in temperature and pressure and has a patented system to

make it so. “It took six months just to get the proper balance,” says Gianluca of the titanium pen, adding that its production is “much more like that of a watch” in its precision. It took many more months of research to receive the worldwide patent. The limited edition collection is available in black anthracite, dark brown and T2 gray—and there’s even a diamond version. Each pen bears the monogram of Armando Simoni on its crown. “It’s another way to pay homage to my father,” says Mrs. Malaguti, president of the new brand. The monogram is also engraved on the 18-karat nib.

Atelier Simoni is based in Bologna, with offices “in the same place where Armando Simoni started Omas,” according to Gianluca. A new manufactory has been built for production, also in Bologna. Without undue pride, Mrs. Malaguti sums up their newest project, “The history of the family continues.”

