



Pressure Looker

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With Chopard and Girard-Perregaux joining the burgeoning ranks of watch companies issuing pens, so it continues in the other direction: the Italian designer Giuliano Mazzuoli has added a wristwatch to his existing catalogue of witty writing instruments inspired by everyday objects. Meet the 'Manometro' - a beautifully functional watch based on a pressure gauge, already commanding cult status around the world.



We have noted before the ever-strengthening watch/pen connection, and how both items are being grouped together more and more for their shared qualities as 'pocket-sized treasures'. Both inspire customers and collectors because of style, rarity, quality, functionality, or any combination of the above.

What has made Giuliano Mazzuoli's pens so arresting is the way he adapts the shapes of familiar, unrelated articles, finding an undeniable aesthetic link. His Moka pen, for example, used the shape of the classic coffee pot designed by Alfonso Bialetti in 1930, while his bowling-pin pen looks just like its name suggests: an elongated bowling pin.

It is the same thinking behind the Manometro wristwatch. The same sense of humour, but - more importantly - the same drive to ensure that quality and intrinsic worth have not been overlooked for the sake of style. Named after the Italian word for pressure gauge, it really does look like it came off a scuba tank or a sphygmomanometer.

True simplicity

Mazzuoli has a thing about value for money, so look elsewhere if you are the sort of masochist who revels in being ripped off. A knowledgeable observer would be forgiven for guessing that it retails at twice its actual price. Inside the 45.2 mm diameter, 14.8 mm thick INOX AISI 316/L stainless steel case is a trusty ETA 2824/2 automatic movement. The dial is as legible as the best railway or military timepiece without looking too 'martial', and the strap is inserted into the robust case with a newly designed system. Although it will dazzle any fashionista, the Manometro is unabashedly functional and nearly devoid of ludicrous design conceits.



(Left) Giuliano Mazzuoli's 'Manometro' watch with polished steel case and cream dial. Note the cylindrical case's distinctive straight-angled base and curved lunette.
(Right) All dial and strap colours can be combined in any permutation the customer desires. Pictured is a blue-dialled model.

The watch had already built up a fan-base even before its formal debut at the 2005 Basel event, especially among Japanese and American collectors, led naturally by the early adopters in Italy. It is one thing to acquire a cult following after a product is released; it is something else to develop a cult before people have even held the actual object. This is a quiet phenomenon that has been creeping up on the industry for almost a year.

Its charm and appeal are very simple: the Manometro does everything 'right', possessing the one thing you simply cannot deliberately instill: cool. In no small part, this is due to the personality of the designer. Fifty-eight-year-old Mazzuoli is unlike most of the 'artistes' hovering around watch exhibitions. He is neither pretentious nor effete, he is devoid of arrogance and he has a sense of humour that explains those pens shaped like bowling pins and coffee pots. Above all, he is open and approachable. After all, Mazzuoli likes to say that he does not design but merely 'encounters' his creations.

Life in design

Mazzuoli took over the family firm in the 1970s, modernising its production of paper inserts and address books for the Florentine leather trade. At the end of the millennium, a friend suggested

that he design a pen. Without wanting to create something for the sake of creating it, it wasn't until he had encountered his inspiration - a box of tools - that he did. 'Officina, Writing Instruments' took off, welcomed by a world known for conservatism and a rather dour approach to style.

Watches had always held some fascination for Mazzuoli, but after devouring all the literature he could find on the subject, he realised this process would only influence a creation that had already existed. The initiative was abandoned... until that day he looked at a pressure gauge in a different way - once again, inspiration in an everyday object.

It is still early days for the watches, so the line is at present pure and unspoiled. We can only hope and pray that, unlike one of its Italian cousins and most other fashionable brands, a bling-bling casualty with a bagful of diamonds isn't let loose on something so visually perfect. The 'classic' edition - what we will be writing about in *QP* in 20 years - is the standard model with polished steel case, crown at 2 o'clock, cream dial and tan strap. But regardless of combination, the UK price is still a blessedly sane £1,750. The cool comes free of charge. ○