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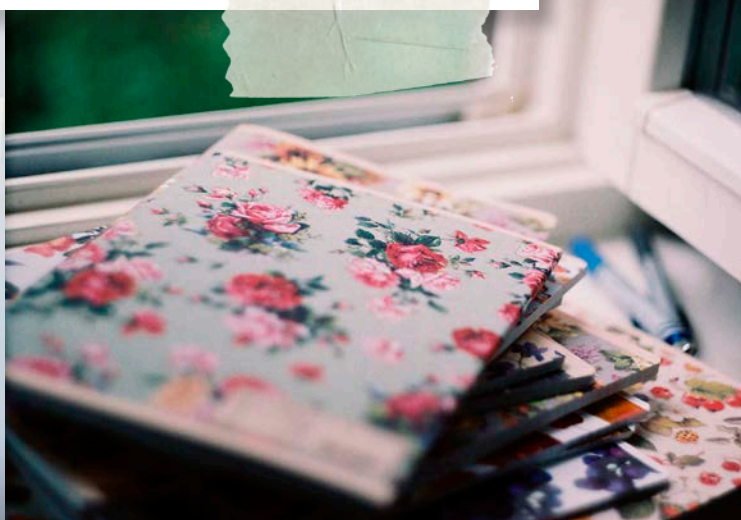


Creativity



Ode to **THE NOTEBOOK**

Notebooks are a great source of joy to us, and it turns out we're not alone. Caroline Buijs has an extensive collection of notebooks at home, and says the best thing about them is that they "don't cost a lot, but they bring you so much happiness."



“A blank notebook holds such promise.
It is a new beginning”

Remember that moment in primary school when your exercise book was almost full and you knew that, in just a few pages, you'd be getting a brand new book to work in? I remember it as a very special moment. As with the annual visit to the supplies shop in my high school years. As well as a new school agenda and covers for my textbooks, this definitely called for a stack of carefully selected notebooks. And new school supplies heralded the new school year. With empty notebooks, without any crossed-out entries or ink smudges: bright and clean.

A blank notebook holds such promise. It is a new beginning. Maybe that explains why so many people seem to buy blank notebooks just to have on hand. They promise to be available to you anytime inspiration hits. That could also explain why there seem to be more old-style notebooks on the market once again. Hard or soft cover, with or without ribbon ties, with or without labels, illustrated with artwork or covered in craft paper: no two notebooks are alike, and that's why collecting them is so much fun.

THE TRUE MOLESKIN

In Bruce Chatwin's book, "The Songlines," the author sings the praises of the little black notebooks he buys in Paris to take with him on a journey to Australia:

"I unpacked some exercise pads and, with the obsessive neatness that goes with the beginning of a project, I made three neat stacks of my 'Paris' notebooks. In France, these notebooks are known as carnets moleskines: 'moleskine,' in this case, being its black oilcloth binding. Each time I went to Paris, I would buy a fresh supply from a papeterie in the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie.

"The pages were squared and the end-papers held in place with an elastic band. I had numbered them in series. I wrote my name and address on the front page, offering a reward to the finder. To lose a passport was the least of one's worries: to lose a notebook was a catastrophe."

It was this particular passage from Chatwin's book that inspired a small Milanese publisher to recreate the little black notebooks, under the brand name Moleskin, in 1997.

PEACE IN A BOOK

The best thing about notebooks is that they don't cost much, but they bring you so much happiness. Sanne Dirkzwager is well aware of this. She owns the shop LikeStationery in Amsterdam (likestationery.com), where she sells beautiful notebooks from around the world. The French, Japanese and Korean notebooks in particular really jump out with their beautiful and elaborate designs. Sanne herself owns—how could it be otherwise?—a huge stack of unused notebooks.

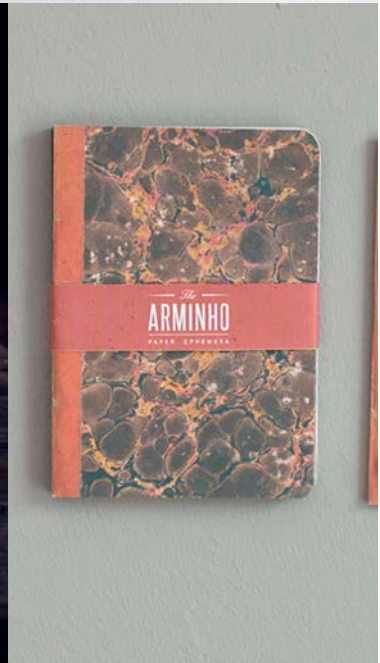
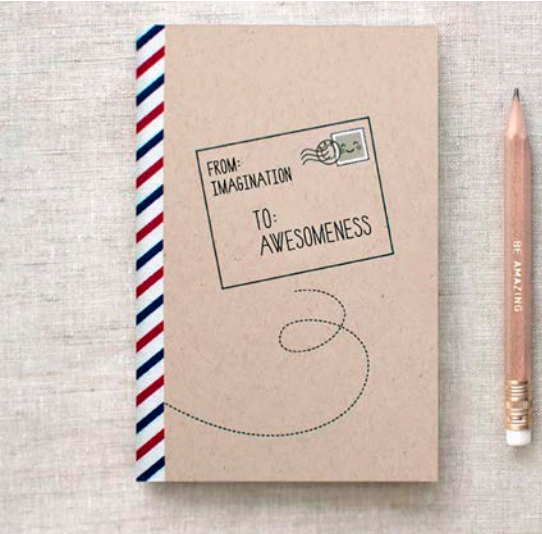
"A notebook that is still blank is magical to me," Sanne says. "Paper that hasn't been written on is just so peaceful. But filling a notebook with my thoughts is just as wonderful. Sometimes I buy two of the same notebook for that purpose: one to leave empty and one to fill with whatever I feel like."

Sanne sees it in her customers, too: for them, the store full of beautiful writing materials is an oasis. All the new notebooks lined up on the table is such a peaceful sight that most of her customers, who already have plenty of notebooks, always buy another one or two just to enjoy.

NEVER ENOUGH

We can always think of yet another reason to buy a new notebook: to take notes, jot down recipes, to make new plans, use as a journal... You can use one as a sketchbook or paste interesting articles in it. You can use one to keep track of the books you've read and which ones you still want to read, movies you've seen and movies you want to see. Thinking things through and entertaining new thoughts always goes best with a fresh pad of paper and a pen. A notebook weighs almost nothing and always fits into your bag. Writers, composers, artists: for centuries they have been carrying notebooks around with them.

Notebooks are also perfect holiday souvenirs: foreign versions are always different enough to be exotic. I love old notebooks from Indonesia with batik covers or Japanese notebooks that are decorated with cherry blossoms. Dusty old antiquarian shops everywhere also hold the promise of great discoveries. Whereas I used to be strict and not let myself start a new notebook until the previous one was filled up to the last page, nowadays I allow myself the luxury of closing a notebook once a project is completed, because then I get a nice new blank notebook, empty and full of promise. ●

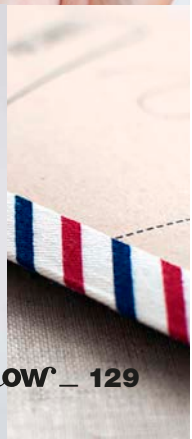
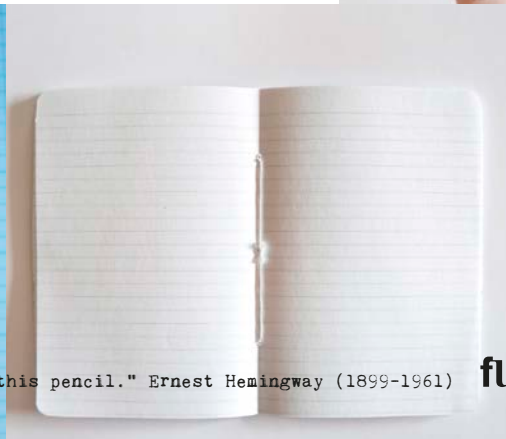
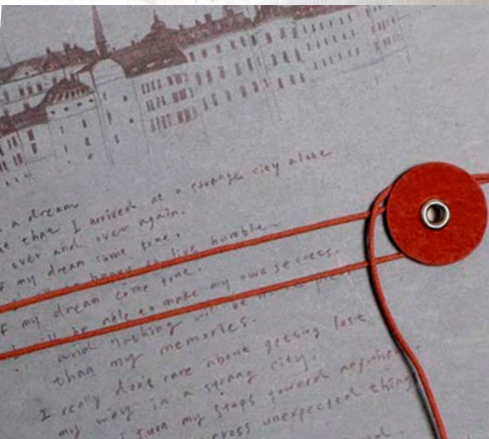


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THE POWER OF PEN AND PAPER

A study conducted by Princeton University and the University of California, Los Angeles, both in the US, brought together 65 students and asked them to watch TED talks. One group made notes on a laptop, the other group made notes with pen on paper. Afterward, both groups had remembered the facts of the talks equally well. But those who had taken notes with pen and paper, it turned out, understood the information better. Also, a week after the experiment, the students who'd gone "analog" showed more insight into the material than the group that had used a laptop.

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"I belong to this notebook and this pencil." Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)