

# The Paper Chase

A Montreal graphic arts couple came up with a couple of good ideas and launched two lines of notebooks



Diane Parenteau and  
Arto Dokouzian  
[www.coupledidees.com](http://www.coupledidees.com)

**N**early two years ago, Montreal graphic arts couple Diane Parenteau and Arto Dokouzian came up with a couple of good ideas for notebooks. Says Dokouzian, the photographer/illustrator half of the team: “Every day we usually write a lot of our ideas in notebooks, with sketches.” Parenteau, the graphic designer half, picks up the thread: “I need notebooks with big margins because I do a lot of sketches with my writing and I want to keep everything in one place. But nothing like this existed in the market.”

So the concept for Couple d’Idées (Couple of Ideas) was born. The pair worked their paper and printing contacts, invested a few thousand dollars of their own money and approached potential retail sales outlets to launch their In the Margin and KM series of notebooks, selling for the modest price of \$6.95 each.

As the name suggests, In the Margin provides generous margins, in different configurations, so that someone can sketch and write at the same time. Architecture students at the University of Montreal, for example, have latched on to the Checkered notebooks, using the grids to do draw things precisely and the white spaces to sketch freehand.

In the KM series, the idea is to literally measure how much you write, so you can keep up a certain daily output. Each page provides four meters of line length, with a total of .25 km per notebook. The notebooks come bundled in packages of four and are neatly labelled on the bellyband “1 km.” Dokouzian points out that notebook use goes hand in hand with working on computers. “Almost everyone sits in front of a computer with a notebook beside them,” he says. “And with a notebook you don’t have to worry about saving what you write or shutting it down when you finish.”

By approaching new potential points of sale wherever they travel (including trips abroad) and working through recommendations of enthusiastic customers, the couple has broadened their network of retail locations throughout Quebec, in Toronto, Ottawa, Chicago, San Francisco, England and France, with new ones added regularly. They also sell the notebooks through their site’s e-Boutique.

Last year, the Couple d’Idées notebooks were given another boost when they were selected as official gift items by the organization for Montreal UNESCO City of Design (the city received this designation in 2006), which are presented to visiting national or international dignitaries. Or they are distributed by official Montreal representatives when travelling abroad.

With demand growing for their notebooks, Parenteau and Dokouzian are contemplating extending their product lines to other notebooks. “And we are considering making altogether different things,” says Parenteau. “We might do something we have no experience with, like designer bags. We want to be open to new possibilities and don’t want to limit ourselves to one thing only. That’s why we are called a Couple of Ideas.”