



Left—rhodium-plated Great Natural Blue Lake fountain pen with 14 karat gold rhodium-plated nib; Penlux Great Natural Rainforest fountain pen with green semi-transparent resin, gold-plated trim, and 14 karat gold nib. Below—Great Natural Deepsea fountain pen with semi-transparent blue resin and rhodium-plated trim.

Manufacturing takes place in Taiwan, and 90 percent of the products are produced in house in order to ensure design and material quality. Production numbers are kept low. Long-time craftsmen create precision-finished writing instruments from PMMA (polymethyl methacrylate) resin, but acetate, ebonite, and metal alloys are also used. Pens are turned and milled with computer numerically-controlled (CNC) lathes. Metal components incorporate the lost-wax technique as well as metal shearing and coining.

Penlux has developed its own piston system module. Due to the complexity and expense of piston mechanisms, the vast majority of piston-filling fountain pens are today made by large manufacturers. Among the very few smaller companies producing piston fillers at moderate prices, Penlux has devised a system that is adaptable to numerous barrel styles and sizes.

Hsu says, "Our piston is based on a 1950s design and not our invention at all, but [it] has been modified to our standards."

Rare among current manufacturers, Penlux produces its own hardware: pocket clips, cap bands, even piston rings and other metal components of the piston and housing. The exterior metal trim is produced in stainless steel and later gold-or rhodium-plated.

Most Penlux nibs are produced by German nib company JoWo in both alloy metals and 14 karat gold, and 18 karat nibs are already in production. Some models incorporate Bock or Schmidt nibs. Casual users and dedicated collectors alike praise Penlux nibs.

I recently acquired two Penlux Masterpiece Grande fountain pens—one in translucent blue and another in a more transparent green. Dipping these large models (comparable in size to a Montblanc 149 or Sailor King of Pen) was fine for testing, but once home, I filled both and was even more pleased. I was immediately struck by the smoothness and solidity of their pistons. They felt and moved like piston-fillers at three or four times the price of the Masterpiece Grande model. Another plus is its considerable ink capacity, with the ink chamber occupying fully half of the barrel's volume.

I was certain the nibs would perform perfectly when filled, and they did. Despite being fine, a nib grade which can prove scratchy, both wrote smoothly with a reliable and consistent ink flow regulated by JoWo feeds.

Presently, Penlux offers three collections. Production numbers remain low because, as Hsu says, "We like to change colors and designs often, always bringing something new to the public."

The Junior, an entry level pen, is slim with a stainless steel No.5 Bock nib and is presently limited to the Asian market. Its size and simple design are intended for casual daily use or for the beginner. The pen feels sturdy when posted and is compact enough to be a comfortable pocket carry. For children just learning cursive writing, the Junior proves appealing and manageable, even when unposted for small hands.

