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KNIVES AS AN ART**



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On both sides of the handle one can find barely detectable panels called Pocket lockets originally design by Joe Kious to hold medication. As one slides back the panels they reveal even more masterful engravings.



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The power of the knight pictured within can clearly be felt through the forceful outlines of the piece accented with the foreboding colors, war is coming.

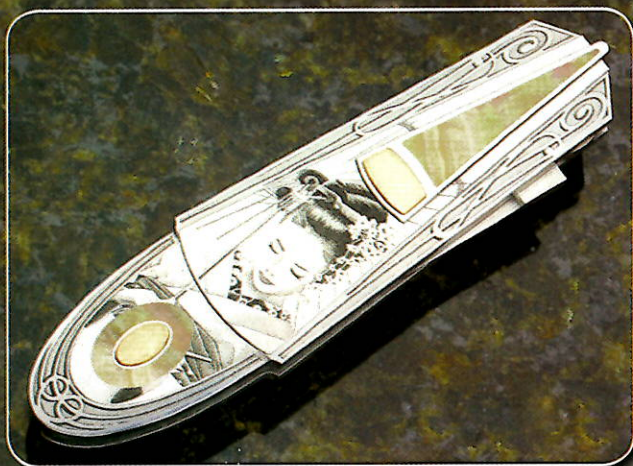
The KNIFE

That is Art

By Abe Elias

Artists choose to work in many different mediums and as the human spirit is limitless, so too is the desire for expression. For high end custom knife makers, their art is a masterful collaboration between the natural and the fabricated. In their desire to create what is in their mind and soul and display it to the world so that other people may understand, knife makers draw on a variety of materials and skills. Steel and machining techniques are taken from the world of technology, while fine materials like gold, mother of pearl and antique ivory are drawn

from the realm of Mother Nature. Shaping these mixed materials into one of mankind's oldest tools with exquisite detail and finish is no less a labor of love than any other art form. Over the past decade, the appreciation for such an art form has grown and with it the value of the art it produces. The knife as a form of art is not only pleasing to the eye but mesmerizing to the touch. To feel and interact with such works draws you into the maker's desire to perfect their piece. The subtle qualities of a smoothly opening blade or the crisp engagement of the locking mechanism all add to the appeal of this form and



Even with the Geisha's eyes closed we are able to peer into her soul and feel her innocence due to the masterful engraving of Simonne Fezzardi.



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"Beauty of Innocence" clean crisp lines and the use of light bring out the organic flow of this piece. The gold inlay and Blacklip Tahitian pearl bring subtle color to the purity of the steel.

drive the collectability of such works. Few makers are capable of the level of skill coupled with creativity to accomplish work worthy of the discerning investor and collector. Much like in the regular art world, people need guidance from dealers and purveyors to help the buyers and artist bridge the gap and become connected with a piece. One such dealer of knife art is Michael Donato of knifepurveyor.com.

Thirteen years ago, Michael Donato started knifepurveyor.com after having traveled throughout Europe and Africa. While on his travels, Michael visited places such as the Louvre and Prada Casa De Greco, where he took great pleasure in viewing the entire local art culture as well as the classics contained in the museums. Upon returning home, he was taken to the New York Knife Show by a friend and immediately recognized highly crafted knives as their own form of art. All they were lacking was someone to connect those who would appreciate them to those who create them. Shortly after, Michael set out to deal in this highly specialized area of art and has been doing it for over thirteen years now. When I wanted to take a closer look at this area of knife making, I could think of none better suited, with more passion for the form, to show me around this highly desirable and collectable form of art.

The first piece is called "The Warrior and Battlefield" by Joe Kious. Often times in the knife world we will get to see pieces derived from a culmination of various artisans' skills, and this particular piece is a perfect example. Joe obtained Damascus steel from Jerry Rados in his famous "Turkish Twist" pattern to create the blade, which is the foundation of any knife. Next, master engraver, C.J. Cai uses 24kt gold, 22kt green gold, 18kt green gold, stainless steel and copper inlays to create a multi-toned background in which Cai would create a medieval fantasy. As with many knife pieces the artistic genius of the work lies not only in what can be easily seen. The expression can also be an execution of the perfect mechanical function of the knife and creative work such as the nearly undetectable panels, called pocket lockets, that slide out to reveal two more engravings of knights on the liners. In all, this piece is a classic both in its subject matter and in the culmination of the work of multiple masters. A knife maker may make many knives in their career, but it is rare to have the same masters collaborate on many different pieces. Joe Kious lives in Texas and has been making knives since 1969. He is nearing the end of his knife making career, leaving a distinctive mark on the knife community with his pieces. As with any domain of art collection, it is hard to imagine that his pieces will not appreciate significantly once he is no longer an active artist.



The gold seems to tell a story of motion and time as the lead of the flow seems fresh and vibrantly moving while the origin seems to be halted and aging.

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This piece is a Soul authorship from the talent of Dellana. Dellana has taken great time to make the majority of the materials for this knife before then crafting them into this one of a kind piece.

The second piece is from Tore Fogarizzu and is engraved by Simone Fezzardi. As much as the previous piece can be appreciated for its complexity and detail, this piece, "untitled", can be appreciated for its simplicity and detail. Clean lines and flawless finish are a tribute to the young innocent women pictured in Fezzardi's drawings. If I had to give this piece a title myself it would probably be the "Beauty of Innocence". Tore uses RWL-34 steel and 416 steel, normally thought of as cold materials, but here they instead convey the purity and youthfulness of the women. Furthering this theme, he also uses Blacklip Tahitian pearl shell and 18kt gold. The use of so few materials reinforces the overall message of the piece. The details of craftsmanship are in the subtle placement of the material and the crisp finish he brings by using a layering placement to give the piece dimension. Much like a person could find themselves lost in the beauty of the women depicted on the piece, it is easy for me to get lost in the beauty of this piece alone. Tore Forgazzi is a highly sought after artist and has a waiting list of over three years. He currently lives in Italy, as does Simone Fezzardi, who lives in the town of Brescia, known for producing the finest of Italian engravers.

Next we have a piece by Dellana, also untitled. Dellana is a highly skilled artisan in many areas; for instance, she forged the Damascus used in the blade herself. The handle material is mother of pearl accentuated in gold drippings. I was drawn to this piece because of its three dimensional presence. It represents a clean traditional design lifted to a new level with the contrast of gold dripped onto the pearl handle. Dripped gold not only creates a feeling of dimension, but also of movement and time. As the fresh gold runs freely about the handle, we see at the origins of its flow signs of aging and arrest. Dellana's piece is not only a visual pleasure but has texture that entertains the sense of touch, not something that can be said about a lot of art. The visual depth to this piece doesn't just stop at the gold: as you look into the mother of pearl, you will see a number of colors and shapes streaming through the handle as light reveals the inner beauty of this natural material. Dellana is a member of the Art Knife Invitational (AKI) of which there is only 25 members. Having sold her first knife in 1994 she has been creating works of art steadily over the past twenty years. Women knife makers are amongst the rarest groups of makers and one can often see their work appreciate very quickly due to that fact.



The second view of the women depicted on the piece seems to draw you in even more as you get the feeling that part of her inner self is now revealed to you through her gaze. The subtle turn of the body shows her willingness to share but a bit of her inner self while she still guard a bit to maintain her mystery to you.



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The lines on Mathew Lerch's piece are crisp, flowing and direct. Direct much like the effect the piece has on the beholder reaching out to them and grabbing their attention working its way into a well of emotions.

Last, is a piece by Mathew Lerch and engraved by Jon Robyn; it is also untitled. If I had to title this piece, I would call it "Seductress" as the borders of the knife seem incapable of containing her allure. The flow of the piece is a combination between crisp geometric lines and organic curves. On the ends of the handles we have crisp diamond and triangular shapes and in between these points we see flows and curves matched only by the curves of the nameless woman depicted on the handle. Lerch uses 416 stainless and 24 kt gold along with Damascus steel in the handle and blade to create this piece. The masterful engraving of Jon Robyn depicts the woman in a serious nonobservant pose on one side, but on the other she is depicted with a playful allure. Detail on this engraving is outstanding: you can follow every line on her face, hair and dress. The blade is a classic delta shaped dagger style, with a couple of twists. The blade has a stepped bevel which provides a crisp change to the flow of the knife's grind. As a secondary effect on the knife, Lerch has a Damascus inlay in the center of the blade using hard geometric diamond shapes. The knife's opening system is referred to as credit card automatic with the trigger being

the sculpted butt at the rear of the handle. Mathew Lerch got his start making knives in 1992 and at one point was one of the head designers for the Harley Davidson Company. Lerch specializes in folding knives and brings his mastery of machining to its apex on the incredible fit and finish of every piece. In fact, Lerch holds the very patent for the credit card automatic design.

It would be impossible to put a limitation on expression and as the knife is mankind's oldest tool it seems only right that it should embody some of our desire for self expression. In many cases of the knives shown in this article, Michael Donato took part in consigning these one-of-a-kind creations to his exacting preference. As this collectable world grows in popularity, so too will the demand. Unfortunately at the level of talent displayed by makers in this genre of art, especially considering that some must specialize in different areas to bring forth these complex pieces, we cannot expect the supply to grow apace with the demand. **AHA**