

Historie om de russiske gravører

fra Sovjet-tiden

af Mikhail Dragunov

Engraver and gunsmith schools were established at Soviet small arms factories after WWII to prepare skilled workers. The school was organized at Izhevsky Mekhanichesky Zavod in 1949.

The first teacher of Izhevsk engravers was Leonard Vassev (1927 - 1972). He was sent to Suhl in 1945 to study engraving skill. His teachers were German engravers from "Gebrueder Merkel" gun factory. Returning home he became the instructor of engraving in the factory engraver and gunsmith school.

Leonard Vassev developed some innovative methods of engraving, among them were "Frost flowers" and using of gold and silver alloys with various parts of ingredients ("painting on metal"). His work - the IZH-54 shotgun which decor devoted to 50th anniversary of the Great October revolution was exposed at the Expo-67 in Montreal in 1967. Now it is keeping in Oruzheynaya Palata (Armoury), Moscow, Kremlin, together with the best masterpieces of Russian and foreign gun art.

His student Valentin Beloborodov (1929 - 2008) continued the style of his teacher. He created a lot of luxury guns using the "Frost flowers" method which he improved.

The next generation of Izhevsk engravers uses a lot of contemporary engraving techniques: relief engraving, gold and silver inlays, gold and silver reliefs, Bulino.

Every unique gun is made by a team consisting of a gunsmith, an engraver, a stockmaker. Often the gunsmith changes some parts of the gun: adds side plates, changes the form of outline between a receiver and a buttstock. Stockmakers make various forend and buttstock forms: Tulip forend, MonteCarlo, Bavarian-style cheekpiece etc. They use only high-grade walnut. Often the engraver makes carving on the wooden parts too.

In 2009 an interesting project was realized by Aleksandr Korobeynikov (b. 1969) in collaboration with painter Denis Nikonov. The painter created a picture in style of François Boucher, a French painter of 18th century. The engraver adopted the picture theme to peculiarities of engraving techniques. The gun (MP-43 with decorative side plates) was completed with a kit: the gun case, a cleaning kit and a drinking bottle. The picture which is placed on the internal side of the case cover creates an "Ouverture" for the gun decoration.

Aleksandr Peredvigin (b. 1951) trains young engravers many years. Starting the work on an unique gun he thinks out the total concept of the gun including its external form. Sometime he changes the design of external parts of the gun. He is a passionate hunter and often finds themes of decoration in the nature.

Since 1997 a creative competition for gunsmiths, engravers, stockmakers of Izhmech/Baikal conducts every autumn. The competition is devoted the memory of Leonard Vassev. Teams of gunsmiths, engravers and stockmakers present their works. The best gun awards with the title "Gun of the Year" and the best engraver receives the "Golden Stichel" award.