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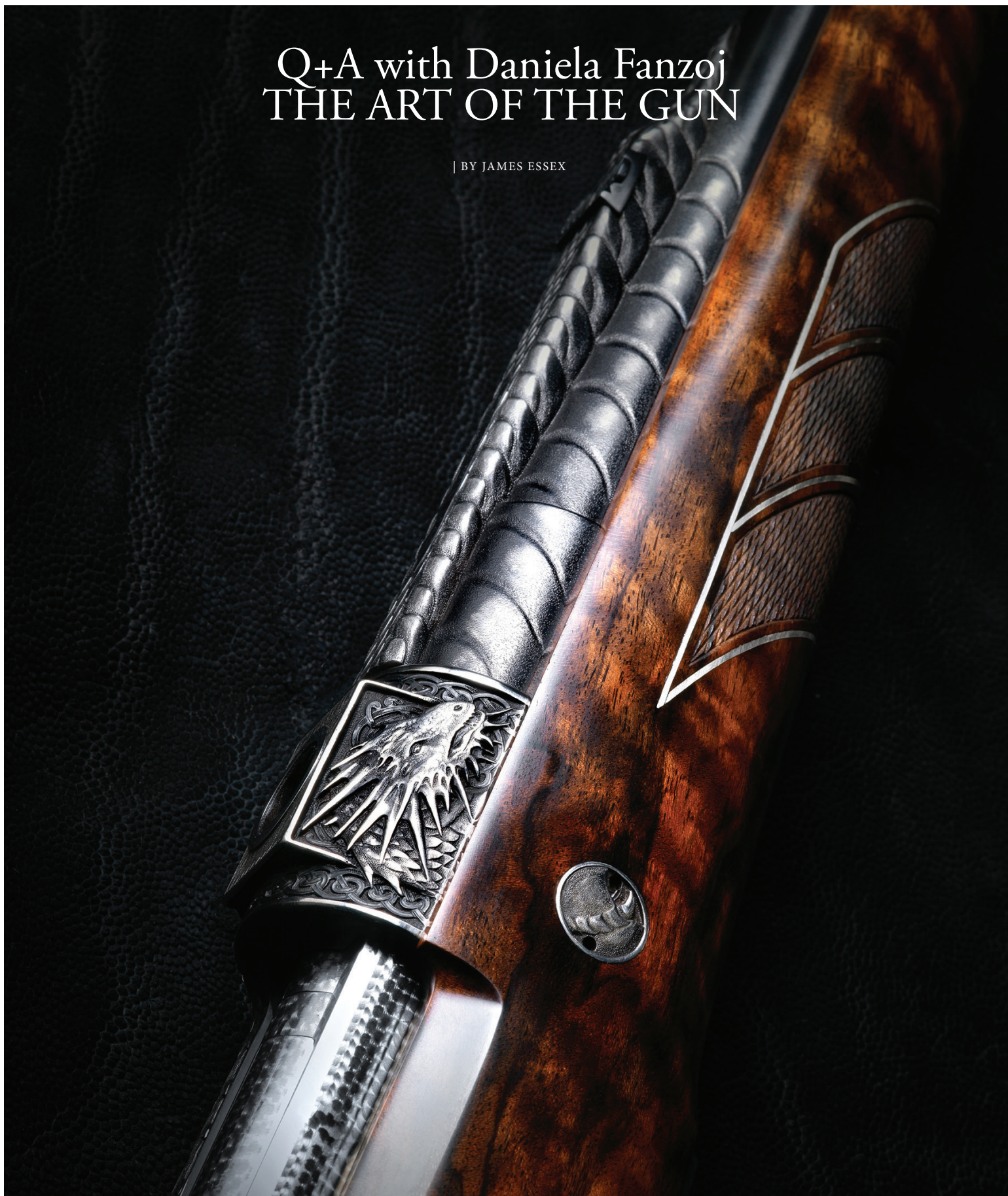


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Q+A with Daniela Fanzoj THE ART OF THE GUN

| BY JAMES ESSEX



What makes something a work of art? This is a question I'm constantly asking myself when I encounter luxury goods designed with beauty in mind. Until recently I had always believed that there were certain things that could never be considered art. For example, I never thought you could turn a modern firearm into a work of art. Well, until I stumbled upon Johann Fanzoj's masterful weaponry art.

The Art of the Gun, as they call it, melds utility and beauty into a firearm that is not only an artistic project but also a status symbol. Much like the grand complication and tourbillon watches of luxury Swiss manufactures, Johann Fanzoj has brought a similar elegance and refinement to the firearm. No detail is overlooked and no expense is spared in the creation of their one-of-a-kind pieces. I loved their work so much that I recently sat down with Director's Daniela and Patrick Fanzoj to discuss the art of their guns, the company's history, and their most recent creation — the Leopard collection.

Tell me a bit about your company, Johann Fanzoj

Our company was established in 1790 in Ferlach, Austria, and we look back on a proud tradition of fine firearms craftsmanship that we've upheld for eight generations. We are still family owned and while we hold firm to our rich heritage of traditional skills and old-world knowledge, we are also bringing a remarkably new vision to this ancient craft.

Today we fascinate collectors worldwide by blending our classic values and high-aesthetics with unprecedented technical sophistication. We only produce a small number of exclusive hunting guns and rifles each year and our model range includes shotguns and rifles – both single, double, bolt actions, and multi-barreled combinations. We also offer individual commissions and concepts — all of which are designed, engineered, and built entirely in our workshop to meet our clients' visions.

What is the inspiration behind melding art and weapons designs?

Weaponry art is one of humanity's oldest forms of individual expression and elaborately decorated weapons have always had strong symbolic meanings throughout history. So the inspiration behind our designs was a way to honor our collective cultural memory, as well as a way to preserve our traditional knowledge for future generations. Today, the five-hundred year old art of gun-making in Ferlach is listed as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage because we're passing on fragile knowledge and craftsmanship skills to a new generation.

But more importantly, we've taken the idea of guns and art to a new dimension. Never before have artistic projects on weapons been so carefully crafted and carried out down to the smallest detail. We manufacture exceptional mechanical masterpieces and use them as a canvas for capturing stories about life, death, passion, hunting, and nature — all themes which appear unmasked as in no other métier. Our firearms are true objects of culture and value, masterpieces in the true sense of the word that honor what has come before and preserve that which may still be lost.

Johann Fanzoj was established in 1790 and you're still currently run by the same family. How have you maintained the classic heritage established by your ancestors while modernizing for the 21st century?

Thank you, that is a very important question. We are the only luxury gun-making firm that has taken up the challenge of attempting to combine the past and present through the use of traditional skills paired with state-of-the-art materials and technology. Traditional skills enable us to naturally envision and develop most individual solutions while modern technology supports a high contemporary performance in our items.

Combining old world gun production methods with modern manufacturing enables us to literally strive for perfection and spend the most amount of time on finely regulating our mechanical items, just like one would with a Swiss watch. This kind of manufacturing process also allows us to preserve all the old crafts that are close to extinction. Engravers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, and leather makers all use our firearms as a canvas for their art and the combination of their traditional methods with our modern methods give life to one another.



Clients today expect a luxury crafts firm to go beyond reviving past ideas. They want to see sparks of creativity in the product and they want to be drawn into the process of co-creating something personal, precious, and unique. That is our perception of luxury and how we honor our heritage while modernizing for our clients.

You speak of ultra-customized pieces, can you walk us through the process of what that entails?

Each item we build is unique. We can't build more than twenty pieces per year. The big projects like "The Great Migration", DRACON, and The Leopard Set take several years to complete. We usually create those



based on our own ideas, without the customer, by exploring one particular theme in a philosophical way; it is a combined effort of world's best artists and artisanal resources, national and international. They are one-of-a-kind pieces.

If your readers are interested in the details of our metal work, woodcraft, and engraving you can read about the process on our website: <https://fanzoj.com/manufacture/production/>

Can you tell us a bit about your most recent project, The Leopard, and its stunning design elements?

The Leopard is a splendid demonstration of craftsmanship, skill, and artistic talent that is expressed across three different weapons: a Fanzoj hunting rifle, a pistol, and a fine custom knife. It took us over three years to bring this exceptional project to life. Using a wealth of talent and craftsmanship from a very high

level. Each weapon is covered with a strikingly realistic depiction of the leopard's skin texture, engraved by fabulous Austrian master engraver Richard Meier, one of the greatest metal artists of our time. Deep-chiselled engraving work of the finest detail gives depth to the art while at the same time creating a three-dimensional effect. Inlays of fossilized mammoth teeth with spectacular scrimshaws seem to almost come alive, as if ready to jump at the observer. The collection was made from Circassian walnut root wood, fossilized mammoth tooth, the best-quality steel, and 24k gold with each piece being embedded in matching leather oak cases. Each case was similarly adorned with the finest handcrafted accessories of fossilized mammoth material, 24k gold-plated, and a leopard portrait on each lid. This collection is our company's crowning achievement. Though we do hope to outdo ourselves once again in the future.

What sets Johann Fanzoj apart from other weapon artisans?

Our continuous exploratory mindset; our inert curiosity and creativity; and our great wish to create items of timeless aesthetics which outperform ourselves with each new project.

Our big theme projects transcend the mere idea of "decoration". We explore symbolism through our artistry. Life-and-death, predator-and-prey, black-and-white. All are themes we associate with hunting and they're expressed through the opulence of our pieces and the excellent craftsmanship only Johann Fanzoj can provide.

07 Is there anywhere else our readers can learn more about your firearms?

Yes, you can visit our website at <https://fanzoj.com> to learn more or commission your own work of art. ♦