



SUBLIME STEEL ARTISTRY WHEN LESS IS

CLINT SMITH ■ PHOTOS: CHUCK PITTMAN, INC.

Although it causes a kink in some folk's craws to see an article on a 1911, this story is different because it's not about just *another* 1911. I have owned countless 1911s and not all of them were always that great. I find myself in an interesting position though. I recently got a pistol that is as good a pistol as I have ever owned — even though it happens to be a 1911. I'd like to tell you about it.

Art

Although I'm not an art fan of sorts — maybe any sorts — I do know what I like to look at. Different things mean, well, different things, to different people, from paintings to music. Picasso is more well-known dead than I will ever be, dead or alive. Yet, I don't get the *Head of Marie* painting — the *Bullfight* I understand — but the Marie-head-

thing loses me. That rap music or thumping stuff that makes my car windows shimmy when the hat-on-backwards-dude pulls up beside me at a stop light, well, no thanks, you can have my share. Although I do admit I can still hear the bass tones, when the other elevator-music, rat-like squeaking Streisand notes are long gone to my ears from too many close-in booms and thumps in the old days.

So it's hereby been announced I'm not much of a judge of modern day art and music. So then what do I like? *The Vietnam Wall* in D.C. left a lasting impression on me. Although it's stated as a memorial, some think of it as art. Another odd form of art to some, but not to me, is riding in the nose of a B24 in flight. The "flying boxcar" is a visual dud to most, but to me I see it as flying art, awkward maybe, but art in its own right.

Real art to me is engraved, cut by hand in steel. I like the shallow cut swirl, floral-like designs, but most of all I am impressed with the fact someone

AN HEIRLOOM PRECISION 1911



MORE





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does it by hand, steel-on-steel. So with these quirks of art in my head as examples, I could add to this list the Jason Burton-built 1911 as another form of steel art — even if only in my eyes.

The Baseline

The baseline pistol is one of my favorites, an original Colt Series 70 5", mostly because they were good pistols and you don't really see that many anymore. The late 1970s was the era when the 1911 continued to work its way

toward being the icon it is — as a stunningly effective defensive handgun. Or, at least to the point any handgun can be stunningly effective.

In the 1970s when we had these guns readily available, sans-good sights and triggers, they often worked well right from the box. This time frame also started the foundation for the custom pistol craftsmanship industry — much of what we take for granted today. Millions of dollars have been spent, businesses and legends made (Baer, Pachmayr, Swenson and Wilson as a few examples) by people working on baseline 1911 pistols.

And, I'd like to add, I was lucky. Young Jason Burton found me a Series

70 as the base pistol for my newly made-up-old-guy-style 1911. So we reach way back to then, for something from now. We'll see, won't we?

The Bottom Half

This Burton-built pistol simply goes through a list of the best of the best parts, modifications and hand-built work money can buy. Taking the original pistol to the bench, the frame and slide were completely detailed. The frame rails were welded up and then the slide reset by hand-fitting. With neither Jason nor I being big magazine-well flare-out guys, the old style small, beveled magazine well was hand-cut. The front of the grip strap on the frame was hand-checked, and the trigger guard was reshaped and cut high to relieve potential negative pressure points for the high grip I like.

I prefer — and got — a nicely checkered flat mainspring housing with a very well done lanyard ring attached for carrying the pistol on-a-rope-mode







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in hostile places, should I find myself in same, but let's hope not. The slide stop was a standard length, yet relieved to prevent magazines from being "wedged" when empty. This allows for a smooth release and drop of the empty mags. The Smith & Alexander grip safety blended into the frame smoothly without allowing any edges to touch between the two parts. At my request the thumb safety is a Colt standard size with no extension whatsoever.

The terminology "breaks like a glass rod" applies to the trigger job that goes off at four pounds, another personal request. The trigger job is declared as "best-quality" — a term not used since the big name British rifle makers — but most appropriate to the work done on this trigger by Jason.

The Top Half

The slide top was flattened and then re-cut with a very cool triple 50 LPI

curved arrow pattern. A truly important issue to me was the installation of professional-grade rear sights that were blended and wrapped to the slide, as only Jason would do. This rear sight is the best "fighting" rear sight I have seen, especially for injury and one-handed operation. I vote for it without reservation.

The front sight is one of my favorite things about the pistol as it has a 24K gold bar inlaid into the sight ramp. Then the whole thing is cut 75 LPI. I can really see this sight in all sorts of light and like it so well I ditched some night sight versions and had Jason set this sight system on several of my older 1911 pistols.

The rear of the slide is cut with a 50 LPI pattern to reduce glare and probably for the CDI (chicks dig it) factor. Jason put a Kart barrel with a 20-degree crown and of course the pistol is chambered for the .45 ACP, which should not surprise anyone. The slide does its thing as smoothly as a polished hydraulic piston might run in the beveled and polished stainless steel EGW bushing. This smooth, dependable operation is continuously assured by the use of a Wilson bulletproof extractor, combined with the polished feed ramp, barrel throat, breech face and chamfered firing pin hole. The ejection port has the old style lowered and flared, cut-and-polish to it. The pistol is set up with Wolff springs of the 16 pound recoil and 23 pound mainspring varieties, making the whole pistol run like a new top. When the top and bottom halves are attached, it makes for a stunning piece of craftsmanship.

The Special Stuff

This next bit may mean nothing to many of the self-proclaimed tactical ninja warrior types. Breeching that ninja-gig, wall of fire, these are things that do nothing except maybe make



me the happy owner. The dust cover on the Burton-built pistol bears a hand-cut oval disc with my initials magnificently done by J.R. French of Texas. The ivory stocks were reshaped and hand fit by Jason and then set on the frame with numbered grip screws for proper indexing on the ivory stocks. In all candor, after this is written and the gun gets beat up a bit, I will probably go to a set of rough texture stocks to allow for a better firing grip on the pistol. All the screws and small parts were Nitre blued, adding just a tinge of eye-sparkler to the otherwise solid blue pistol.

A Shooter

Everything here needs to be taken into consideration with the fact I was attached to the pistol and shot it by hand, not off some metal rest thing. I haven't figured out how to take one of those gun-holder-metal-table-things into a fight, so I don't shoot off them when I shoot guns for accuracy or function testing. Bluntly, accuracy-wise, I know the Burton 1911 out-shot me at the range, then again most handguns do. Groups then reflected bi-focal eyes and sort of busted-up hands.

I shot Corbon DPX and as well 230 gr. FMJ ammo at ranges to 25 yards on paper, and eight steel plates. I shot several groups over several days to get a feel for the pistol, and also to put several hundred rounds through it so it's ready to be brought online as a personal defense tool. To argue group size is a waste of time with a pistol like this. What's the difference, anyway, on a fighting pistol? Nothing — so I won't. Besides, in your hands, or someone else's, it will be different. Suffice to say

I'd bet my life on its abilities.

The Burton 1911 works the way a handgun is supposed to, as the pistol functioned flawlessly, without any effort, every time I shot it. And that is all I have to say about that.

What I Think

I think I have scored an absolutely magnificent mechanical device made by a very competent young man. Although my first inclination is to store or safe-princess the Burton 1911, in reality it's going to work. This is an everyday carry pistol to be used for the serious work of personal defense for my family. Being an older guy I think I'll see if I can wear it out, as I grow even older. Growing older I work to also be growing a bit smarter at the same time, so the potential for me to use the pistol for interpersonal confrontations is very limited. That said, if I ever *had* to use the Burton 1911, I would, in fact, be using one of the very best of the best pistols I have ever owned.



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