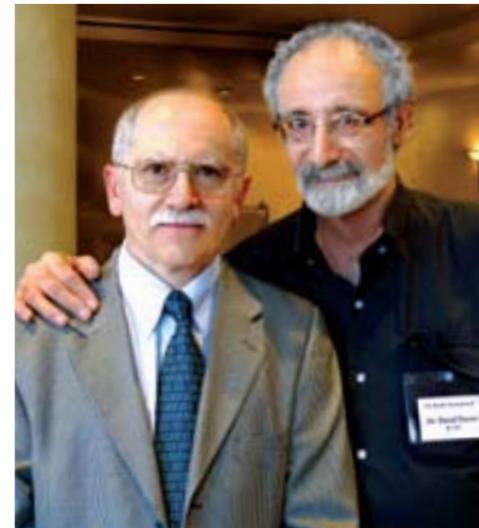




The Engraving Art of Amayak Stepanyan, USA

By Dr. David Darom



Amayak Stepanyan with the author at the 2009 San Diego Art Knife Invitational (AKI) Show.

Born in 1949 in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, Amayak Stepanyan lived in Russia between 1951 and 2000. He was apprenticed as a watchmaker at the early age of 17 and followed the watchmaking profession for the next 11 years. Inspired by the engraving skills of a fellow watchmaker, Amayak taught himself to engrave in his spare time, first copying designs of famous artists, then creating designs of his own. Within a few years he was working as an engraver for the Russian Souvenir Company in Moscow. In the years that followed he became a highly skilled, meticulous, technically accomplished artist and inspired designer with a unique style of engraving.

Opposite page, from the left:

Collaborations with Owen Wood, USA "New York", 2008

A liner lock folder sporting an Owen Wood composite Damascus blade with an Explosion-pattern edge, anodized-titanium liners and Damasteel bolsters inlaid with Brown-lip pearl. The 416 stainless steel handle is engraved by Amayak with the image of the Empire State Building. Overall length 5 1/2" (140 mm).

"Art Deco Style Folding Dagger", 2007

The 3-bar composite blade is precision forged from Herringbone and Explosion Damascus with 18k gold dots to assist opening. Titanium liners have a chamfered edge which stands proud of the scales and bolsters. Front and rear bolsters are 416 stainless steel, carved by Amayak. Scales are exhibition grade Pietersite. Spacer is 303 stainless steel, decorated in a diamond pattern and blued. Overall length 7" (178 mm).

Collaborations with Jerry McClure, USA "Art Nouveau Baby Sister", 2009

The blade is made of 30 twist Damasteel with pink gold dots to assist opening. 416 stainless steel bolsters were carved and engraved by Amayak. Premium Black-lip pearl scales. Titanium liners fileworked, jeweled and anodized. Built with Jerry's jeweled pivot consisting of 8 rubies inlaid into the liners for the blade bearing surface. Overall length 5 5/32" (131 mm).

"Dragons Breath Baby Sister", 2009

The blade is made of 30 twist Damasteel with 18k gold dots to assist opening. 416 stainless steel bolsters, engraved by Amayak. Presentation grade dimpled Mother-of-Pearl scales. Titanium liners are fileworked, jeweled and anodized. Built with Jerry's jeweled pivot consisting of 8 rubies inlaid into the liners for the blade bearing surface. Overall length 5 5/32" (131 mm).

While working for the Russian Souvenir Company he created various three dimensional coining, medals and medallion dies, using traditional hand gravers, chisels and hammers and executed exquisite portraiture and floral designs in both high and low relief, directly in steel. On the strength of this extraordinary ability and with the support of his many American friends, he was permitted to immigrate to the USA in 2000 settling with his wife Svetlana, in Denver, Colorado.

In 2002, life took a new direction when Amayak was introduced to the world of custom knives and its infinite creative possibilities. Amayak had been fascinated with knives since childhood and still remembers his first knife, a miniature folding knife he received when he was 5 years old. Now, through his very successful collaboration with Owen Wood, Amayak fulfills his creative dreams, engraving the objects that always fascinated him.

This is what he said to me when I asked for his opinion on the various artistic disciplines related to modern custom knifemaking: *"The amazing talent I have found in the field of modern hand crafted knives astounds me. Over the past 10 years I have been lucky enough to have met many talented engravers and knifemakers. Their beautiful and original work inspires me and pushes me to keep my work at the highest level"*.

Amayak has become a highly sought after engraver, mainly due to his dramatic high relief Art Nouveau and Art Deco carving and engraving in steel, gold and silver and titanium. His future plans are to begin making full authorship carved and engraved knives, both fixed-blades and folders.



Photo: Jurgen Steinau



Opposite page, from the left:

Collaboration with Owen Wood, USA
"Art Deco Style Folding Knife", 2008

The 3-bar composite Damascus blade is forged from Pinstripe, Explosion and a unique precision bar of triangles and dots. 18k gold dots to assist opening. Titanium liners, anodized gold, stand proud of the scales. Damasteel bolster. 416 stainless steel scales carved by Amayak. Overall length 5 1/2" (140 mm).

Collaboration with William Henry, USA
"B 10 Interframe", 2007

Blade is Typhoon Damascus made by Devin Thomas, titanium frame engraved by Amayak Stepanyan, *Shakudo Mokume* inlays and diamonds set in gold. Rose gold bail. Overall length 6" (152 mm).

Collaboration with Steve Hoel, USA
"Tamara de Lempicka", 2009

A medium "Coke Bottle" folder with an ATS-34 blade and spring and a 416 stainless steel frame engraved by Amayak Stepanyan. Premium Mother-of-Pearl inlays. Overall length 7 1/4" (184 mm).

This page:

Engraving Medallion dies

An engraved 3D steel die and the medallion made from it, one of many made by Amayak using traditional hand powered engraving tools.

