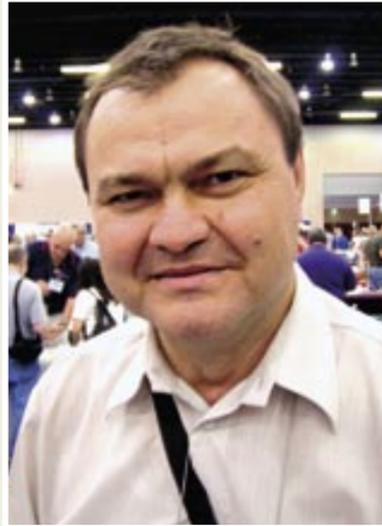


**Arpad Bojtos**  
Slovakia

Arpad Bojtos was born in 1956 in the southern part of what is now Slovakia. After finishing his studies in economics, he was employed in various state companies in the former Czechoslovakia. Most of his free time was spent visiting museums and art galleries or painting and woodcarving, which had been his main hobby since childhood. Given the lack of space at home and the high cost of materials, he had begun to do lino-cut graphics and had replaced the big pieces of wood with pieces of bone, which he carved in his kitchen just for his wife's satisfaction.



In 1983, while on a business trip to Damascus (Syria), he found the time as usual, to visit several museums and was confronted with a great number of exquisite oriental knives and daggers. Later, while wandering among antique

shops, he found many attractive pieces of cutlery that he regretfully could not afford, as he had just bought a family house. Not having the extra money for his new passion, Arpad decided to put his hobby to work and create similar objects for his own pleasure. He made his first knife three years later, in 1986.

Arpad has kept on making knives ever since, his hobby becoming a full-time obsession only in 1989, after the fall of communism. In 1991 he began to participate actively in several European knife shows and, beginning in 1995, began visiting some of the American shows too. In 1996 he became a member of the Knife Makers Guild.

Bojtos creates all his knives as one-of-a-kind artworks; no two pieces are ever the same. He uses hand tools exclusively for stock reduction and carving, and his favorite tools still remain the hammer and chisel. Carving steel by hand is so time consuming that Arpad can make no more than 8 knives per year. He also carves the steel blades, preferring to work with ATS-34 or 440C when making fixed-blade knives. For his folders he often uses Damascus steel. Having made over one hundred knives to date, Arpad likes to use themes based on various classic and historic events, mythology, nature and exotic cultures.

*When I made my first knife I intended to carve the handle and sheath myself as I had much practice from years of bone carving. I used a stag antler for the handle, but asked a gun carver to decorate the blade for me using my drawings. Luckily for me he refused to do this, as he had never carved human figures before. One of my friends, Julius Mojzis, a blacksmith, knifemaker and engraver, advised me to try carving the steel myself. He also showed me how to sharpen the chisels for working on steel and for carving silver and gold. That was all the pushing I needed.*

*Arpad Bojtos*

Opposite:

**"Column Dagger", 2003**

This knife was made to honor the memory of ancient Rome. The steel used for the knife and the she-wolf is 440 C, the capital is made of silver with gold acanthus leaves. The handle is made of ivory. The sheath is also made of ivory combined with black buffalo horn and silver and gold fittings. Overall length 12" (305 mm).  
*from the collection of Don Guild, Hawaii.*





**Making the "Indian Buffalo Hunter"**

After creating the rough shape of the knife, the steel is heated to a temperature of 860°C for 45 minutes to obtain the relative softness needed for carving. Bojtos doesn't like to use vices, so he uses the pitch-pan to hold the blade steady while carving. He first carefully plans the designs, and then draws them on the steel using felt-tip markers. A rough carving of the relief is made with hammer and chisels. The relief is then "cleaned" using files and scrapers, and Arpad proceeds to carve in the fine details. Finally the three-dimensional picture is cleaned out and finished using sandpaper and grinding pastes. After heat treating the steel, Arpad fixes the handle slabs to the knife with 14k gold pins.

Arpad spends a great amount of time researching a subject and begins to visualize the design for a knife long before he actually starts working on it. He sketches again and again while discussing his designs with his wife, Daniela, and daughter, Zuzana, who are his first and severest critics. It sometimes takes him months, even years, before he makes the final drawings for a new knife. Only then does he begin to choose suitable materials for the handle and sheath. It is an unwritten rule with Arpad not to use walrus or narwhale ivory for a tropical design or exotic woods and elephant ivory when carving an arctic scene. Old trees are often a dominant feature in his carving, as his work space overlooks the town's park, with many of its hundred-year-old trees in full view.



Opposite:  
**"Indian Buffalo Hunter"; 2004**  
 A Semi-Integral made of 440C steel. The handle material is Cocobolo wood, and the sheath is made of one piece of hollowed-out Cocobolo wood, with silver fittings darkened by sulphuric acid. The buffalo skulls on the sheath are carved mammoth ivory. Overall length 9 2/8" (240 mm).  
*"For this knife, as I often do for my knife carvings, I chose a theme related to native tribes and their association with the surrounding wildlife. Since I like to combine both human and animal elements, I think this is a typical knife of mine".*





Above:

**"Captain Cook", 1998**

An Integral knife made of ATS-34, which is a very suitable material for fine carving. The handle is of mammoth ivory. The ivory globe can rotate. The sheath is made of stingray skin and has carved silver fittings. Overall length 9 7/16" (240 mm).

Opposite, from the right:

**"Jaguar Hunter", 1999**

The steel for this Semi-Integral is 440C stainless steel. The handle material is mammoth ivory carved and combined with ebony. Dots on the jaguar are inlaid with ebony pins. The sheath is made of stingray skin and has carved silver fittings. Overall length 7 7/8" (200 mm).

**"Perseus Fighter", 2000**

This deeply carved Semi-Integral is made of 440C. The handle and sheath materials were chosen to accentuate the snakes on Medusa's head, held high in the hand of Perseus. The handle material is snakewood and the sheath is made of snakewood partly covered with snake skin, silver fittings and a gold snake. Overall length 7 7/8" (200 mm).

**"Chameleon", 2002**

The blade is ATS-34. The handle and the sheath are made from moose antler. The sheath with silver fittings is partly covered with ostrich skin. Overall length 7 7/8" (200 mm).





On the left:

**"The Snail Hunter", 2004**

A Semi-Integral, made of 440C steel. The handle material is carved moose antler, the sheath is made of moose antler, stingray skin, silver and 14k gold. Overall length 7 7/8" (200 mm). *"Sometimes I like to choose a subject that depicts smaller living creatures, rather than carving "big game" animals like lions and elephants. These are quite often living creatures that can be found and studied in my garden, at home. One such animal is the tiny snail I chose as the subject for my three dimensional carving on the steel of the blade and on the handle material. For the sheath I chose to carve a small frog".*

Opposite, from the right:

**"The Unicorn", 2002**

Arpad used narwal ivory for both handle and sheath, physically connecting this knife to the medieval legend of the Unicorn that is carved on it. Damasteel was used for the blade, and stingray skin combined with silver and gold fittings complete the ivory sheath. Overall length 12 1/2" (317 mm).

**"Gazelle", 2003**

The deeply carved steel is ATS-34. The boxwood for the handle and sheath were something of a challenge, as in the Middle Ages it was very popular as a handle material in Central Europe. The sheath is partly covered with ostrich skin and has silver fittings combined with gold. Overall length 9 7/16" (240 mm).

