

# HOLT'S

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## In the Gunroom... with Hartmann & Weiss

*"... Our rifles are still made the way they were 100 years ago... the difference between the individual rifles lies solely in the design in combination with the balance and precision. The fundamental mechanics are similar to clocks, more or less the same in all..."* is Gerhard Hartmann's elusive response when asked what is so special about Hartmann & Weiss shotguns and rifles. There is a huge sense of history and tradition pervading the conjoined workshops and showroom. The second you walk in, there is a feeling of stepping back in time. Mobile telephones and the internet are conspicuous by



their absence. This sense of tradition runs deeper than the physical surroundings, the trappings you would find in any high-class gunshop, but in fact forms an integral and vital part of the essence of the company. Just like the rifles are still made the way they were 100 years ago, so is the company ethos. This feeling is summed up perfectly by Sebastian, the youngest

employee at Hartmann & Weiss who is in the middle of training to become a Master Gunsmith, "... today it is rare to be able to work in such a traditional way as a gunmakers as at Hartmann & Weiss... there is no-one else in Germany who manufactures rifles and guns of such a standard and in this quality. With this training you usually end up in a repair workshop for new rifles which is relatively monotonous work. In contrast, at Hartmann & Weiss you are fully involved in the manufacturing process of these traditional rifles and can even incorporate your creativity..."



Formed in 1965, Hartmann & Weiss have become one of the leading gunmakers of fine bespoke rifles and shotguns. Gerhard Hartmann became interested in the art of gunmaking after listening to a radio report with his father in the early 1950's. He was fascinated by the craft, and as soon as he was able, began training to become a master Gunsmith. After gaining experience with a variety of gunmakers, both in Germany and abroad, it was during his time at Vandrey & Co., Hamburg that he met Otto Weiss.



Otto, having followed in the footsteps of father and grandfather before him, had also trained to become a master gunsmith, both in Suhl and in the United Kingdom. He joined Vandrey & Co. in 1963, two years after Gerhard.

It was a matter of months before the two men branched out on their own, to form Hartmann & Weiss. Initially as small workshop solely offering gunsmithing and repair work, it was almost by chance, according to Gerhard, the company moved into producing fine hand-crafted firearms, and by 1970 were designing their own.

The company specialise in bolt-action rifles and falling-block rifles, but they also build best quality shotguns and double rifles. Since 1996 they have made just over 280 firearms.



Each one of these masterpieces, and they are masterpieces, will have taken anything between two and ten years to create. Gerhard proudly proclaims "... *the customer expects us in working overalls and trousers...*" and both him and Otto will have been personally involved in every step of the process. If, for example, you watch how Otto Weiss artistically and precisely creates two small screws during

a working day, which are then counter-sunk into a triggerguard tang and stock with absolute perfection, you begin to understand how much work goes into a Hartmann & Weiss rifle. The story didn't begin here, 20 years ago it will have been them that chosen the exact tree, from which this stock is crafted. It goes without saying, that each weapon is completely bespoke. There is no 'off the peg' line here.

The only part of the process they are not directly involved in is the engraving, which is outsourced to a select few trusted chosen engravers. The more elaborate the engraving, the more time is needed, the standard engraving for a bolt rifle would have taken at least 25 man-hours to complete whilst the more elaborate engraving could take over two years to complete, and could cost up to 25,000 Euros. Considering up to 1,000 man-hours can be needed to manufacture a Hartmann & Weiss sporting gun, it is easy to see why they command the prices they do.

They have been successfully working together as business partners for 46 years, which "... *is a much greater art than manufacturing good rifles...*" says Gerhard drily. They have remained very much down to earth despite this success, "... *the most precious thing I own...*" states Gerhard "... *is a 1965 Rolex to commemorate our founding year...*" a gift from a satisfied customer, and a gift which Otto also received. According to Otto Weiss, the order situation is good, continually increasing, and they have never experienced a decline in orders. Simple wooden boxes are stacked all over the workshop with unfinished gun barrels sticking out of them. Each box is an order, and each order a customer who is waiting for his personal dream. "...*we could manufacture more and faster if we had more employees...*" says Gerhard, "...*but these (employees) are very difficult to find and the future of this profession is uncertain. Even*

*the few that are "qualified" often don't meet the high standards that are required in a manufactory like ours."* Today, customers come to them. Recommendations from their satisfied customers are the only advertisements they need. Around 25 years ago, Gerhard and Otto considered buying a famous name to operate under, but it soon became apparent that the name 'Hartmann & Weiss' was more than sufficient.



What does the future hold? Otto Weiss is convinced that the marque is strong, even when the founders are no longer there. In contrast to most master craftsman, they have ensured that their knowledge, in the form of detailed plans and illustrations, can be passed onto a future generation who will continue the legacy.

Gerhard Hartmann plays down the significance of the Hartmann & Weiss brand in his typically Hanseatic manner, "... Reputation? I don't know if we really have a reputation... we simply manufacture rifles and shotguns and sell one now and again..."

**Hartmann & Weiss Lots in Holts 23<sup>rd</sup> June Sale:**

Please click on the following links to access the online catalogue.

[Lot 1101 - A Hartmann & Weiss 7 x 64 Bolt Magazine Sporting Rifle.](#)

[Lot 1147 – A Fine Hartmann & Weiss .375 H&H Mag. Bolt Magazine Sporting Rifle](#)

[Lot 1208 – A Fine Hartmann & Weiss .30R System Hagn Falling-Block Sporting Rifle](#)

[Lot 1209 – A Fine and Virtually Unused .500 Nitro Express System Hagn Falling-Block Sporting Rifle](#)

[Lot – 1210 An Exceptional Virtually Unused Hartmann & Weiss Funk Engraved 9.3 x 74R Easy-Opening Sidelock Ejector Double Rifle](#)

[Lot – 1225 A Fine Hartmann & Weiss Funk Engraved 7 x 75R V.H. Heeren Patent Falling Block Sporting Rifle.](#)