

# The Renaissance Master

When one thinks of the very best guns it is often difficult to look beyond British shores. But the discerning collector will know there is a hidden gem in the hills of northern Italy. Luciano Bosis is possibly the greatest living producer of sporting shotguns, as **Alex Flint** discovers.

**H**ow is it that from the smallest of packages can come the finest of things? Throughout history there are examples of passion and hard work coming up trumps against established names and investment. From a shooting perspective we might look to Michael Louca and Watson Brothers, a firm of three or four committed men working in a small London workshop and producing guns that challenge the best Holland & Holland or Purdey can offer.

The situation in Italy is no different: Brescia is the heart of Italian gunmaking, the place Beretta calls home. But in a tiny workshop in Travagliato, Bosis makes some of the world's most desirable guns.

For many, Italy has come to be the first and last word in shotguns. If you're looking for a versatile gun to take on clays or high birds, you need look no further than Beretta's Silver Pigeon range. But of course, a gun can be much more than simply a tool. Those with a passion for artistry will undoubtedly wax lyrical about Purdey, Boss or Holland & Holland. But mention the name Bosis and even the most ardent of British supporters is likely to yield.

The master gunmaker Luciano Bosis has been working with guns since he was just 12 years old. His earliest experience, with Galesi, who specialised



Luciano Bosis is a working gunmaker as well as the figurehead of the company.

in producing pistols, gave Luciano his basis in gunmaking. But it was his move to Perazzi in 1971 which allowed him to devote himself to shotguns. He claims to have read "every book available about gunmaking" by the time he was 20, and was an accomplished craftsman. But making someone else's guns was not enough for him, and in 1976 he left Perazzi, opening a gun shop to sell and repair guns in 1977.

Luciano had already turned part of his house into a gunmaking workshop in 1968, and committed all he had to building his first shotgun. The first guns



Above: The company's coat of arms features on the fore-end of every Bosis gun.



Above: A trigger plate action ready to be fitted to a superb Bosis shotgun.

Left: The small team construct guns of the highest standard with traditional methods.



The quality of carving, engraving and finishing on Bosis guns can rival any other gunmaker.

he made were a pair of 12 bore side-by-side shotguns, built to the standards that inform every gun built since.

Luciano speaks of each of his guns having a 'soul', something that anyone who has ever held a best gun, be it English or otherwise, will certainly be able to identify with. But his guns really might have a life of their own, so elegant are their lines and so fine the engraving and finishing.

Bosis guns also shoot famously well, feeling incredibly light and yet also giving little recoil. Like all best guns, there is something timeless about them.

Though they are not yet a household name, Bosis have long been known by the shotgun connoisseur. In 2004 at a Sotheby's sale in Gleneagles, a pair of single trigger sidelock ejector over-under guns engraved by Angelo Galeazzi sold for a staggering £106,400.

The gunmaking operation is very much a family affair, headed by Luciano himself, who is still a working gunmaker. Luciano's original pencil drawings have been transposed into Computer-Aided

Design files, ready for the advanced computer-numerical control (CNC) machines which are now de rigeur amongst all but a handful of the smallest gun manufacturers. CNC machinery is used to manufacture frames, fore-end irons, locking bolts, trigger plates and other smaller parts of the gun. But like the best English guns a vast amount of work with the hands is still required to complete the guns.

Luciano's daughter Laura, herself a master engraver and finisher, manages the day-to-day affairs of the firm, and she explained the makeup of the workforce: "There are five people directly employed by us and several independent subcontractors who work exclusively for us, for stocking and barrel polishing. The in-house team consists

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of a few key people: Luciano Bosis, of course, Franco Zini who joints and tests the function of the guns in the white and gets them ready for engraving, and Massimo Scalvini, Luciano's nephew, who prepares the guns for the National Proof House, fire tests them and makes all necessary final adjustments. Ivan Cotali was the last one to join the team. He is responsible for gun fitting in the white and had been working in gunmaking for many years before coming on board. Luciano is in charge of every other operation."

**Unparalleled quality**

Just 25 to 30 guns are made each year, though Laura admits that a gun is never truly finished in their exacting eyes: "I believe that when people see a Bosis gun, they can really feel our passion and care. They understand we think more about the quality of our guns than about the money we can make.

"If we could, we would keep all our guns here. We would love to take care of them forever - a shotgun is never completely finished and ready for us. However, eventually we force ourselves to put it in its case and ship it, otherwise we would just go on forever.

"We are always sad when a gun leaves our workshop. We are proud of it, but it feels as if a member of the family is leaving. It can take us up to two years to finish a gun, and that is a long time. We see a block of steel grow into a beautiful product, and it is tough to let go of it."

Having high standards when it comes to producing the guns would be meaningless without good quality materials. Bosis are so confident in their suppliers that much of the catalogue for their flagship Michelangelo over-under gun is given over to describing the metallurgy and composition of the steel alloys used in the various parts of the guns, as Laura explains: "We work with the best possible suppliers and craftsmen. The colour case hardening is done by either St. Ledger in England or Schilling in Germany. The coin finishing is done here in Brescia.

"Of course, the better the metal preparation before the finishing, the better the finishing will look. And also, the better the polishing of the engraving, the higher the overall final quality will be. Our guns come in cases manufactured by Nizzoli in a very specialised workshop here in Brescia.



Whether fantasy scene or English rose and scroll, any design of engraving can be had.

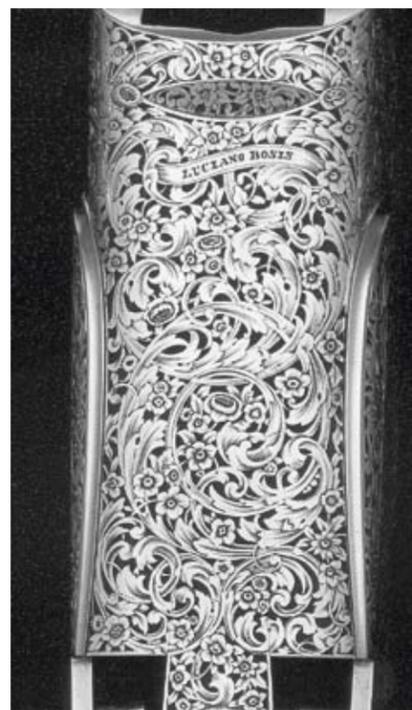
"We have always believed in quality more than quantity. We are craftsmen. We are not greedy. Every gun is built with attention to every single detail, regardless of the number of hours it takes us to meet the strict Bosis standards. Of course, we cannot build many shotguns a year but we build the best quality - which will always sell."

The Bosis range consists of four guns: two over-under and two side-by-side. The Holland & Holland-style sidelock and Anson & Deeley boxlock side-by-sides are known as the Queen and Country models respectively, which is sure to raise a wry smile on the faces of patriotic readers. Bespoke guns like the rest of the Bosis range, they are particularly popular in Italy.

The real draw for foreign buyers, however, are the over-under guns. There is a boxlock built on an Anson & Deeley action with monobloc barrels called the Wild, which is a gun "for all seasons and conditions". It is ideal if you are concerned about damaging or destroying a dream or a lifetime's savings, and can even be had with a full sideplate for engraving. At €20,000 in the white and with a waiting time of just eight months, it is certainly an accessible entry into one of the world's finest gunmakers.

The jewel in the crown is the Michelangelo over-under. Designed entirely by Luciano Bosis, the gun was influenced by the Boss over-under, which is certainly a fine starting point

The Michelangelo over-under shotgun was designed entirely by Luciano Bosis and his team.



The construction, engraving and finishing of every component is second to none.

for any gun. Luciano designed the innovative lockwork himself, scaling it to .410, 28, 20, 16 and 12 bores.

The design is patented by Bosis and is particularly interesting in that the mechanism is affixed to the plate on three integral columns, rather than

being fixed with pins as is traditional. These columns are threaded for specially designed retaining screws, which greatly reduce transmission of vibrations when firing the gun, reducing wear and tear on the components of the lock.

The whole lockplate is in turn fitted to the gun using just two screws, which are hidden behind a small plate. This

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totally pinless design gives a vast canvas over which the engravers may work, giving the guns a beautiful flow and allowing for some absolutely spectacular designs.

Engraving comes from a vast range of artists, each being personally recommended depending on the customer's needs. Absolutely anything can be engraved, from traditional English rose and scroll to fantastical images of Ancient Greek mythology and beyond.

The Michelangelo sidelock costs €50,000 in the white, with engraving costing anything from €2,500 - €30,000 on top. On average it takes one year to build a Michelangelo over-under. However if a customer wants a very complicated engraving pattern it may take up to two years to complete.

The small gunmaking team at Bosis are particularly proud of their work, as Laura explains: "I believe that designing and producing true scaled actions for every calibre makes the Michelangelo pretty unique. Our shotguns have very distinctive features and are easily recognisable. We use the best steel and we finish every gun in the best possible way.

"The English gunmakers like Purdey, Boss and Holland & Holland are very famous names, and rightly so. They originally created the idea of 'best' guns and we share with them a complete belief in technical reliability and a total love of beauty.

"We also truly admire many Italian makers; from Fabbri to Piotti and Elli Rizzini just to mention a few. They all represent and promote the best of Italian manufacturing and make splendid firearms. They all have long and meaningful histories.

"Some of them started just because they were passionate about building beautiful guns. We admire them for their strength and courage to start their own companies, grow them and make them known all over the world."

That Bosis, a tiny Italian gunmaker should rightly sit so comfortably amongst all those great names should tell you all you need to know about this passionate firm. 🦋

For more information about the shotguns made by Bosis visit the company website [www.bosis.com](http://www.bosis.com)



Luciano Bosis chooses the stock blanks for his guns himself, visiting Turkey and Russia.