

# Review of: TRUArt Stage 2 Dual Pen Professional Woodburning Detailer 60W Tool with Digital Temperature Control, 20 Tips and Case

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## What's Included:

- Carrying Case with handle
- Dual Output Power Supply
- 2 handpieces with attached cords
- 20 interchangeable tips
- Assorted tools including plier & tweezers to insert the tips as well as a set of diamond files
- 2 Plastic pen holders
- 2 little sponge pads (? Use)

## Things I liked:

### **Manual & Storage case, 2 handpieces with cords, 20 tips & assorted tools are included**

This kit comes complete with everything you need to get started. There is a very nice manual which includes a photo of the burner & accessories with a numbered list of the various parts & names. The photo shows the numbers pointing to each part which makes it easy for the user to determine what each part is & where it goes. The storage case contains a place to store the tools that come with this kit. The main part of the storage case contains a Styrofoam panel with cut-outs for the burner, pens, pen holders & plastic case holding the extra tips. The storage case comes with a handle which makes it a nice feature if you intend to take your burner to class. Personally I think the case is nice but it does not provide any extra space to carry any extra items you might need if you are going to a class such as cleaning tools to keep your tips clean, sanding pads, etc.

## Things I did not like:

- MADE IN CHINA!
- The company itself does not manufacture or repair any of these tools. If it ever breaks, especially after the warranty, you are taking a chance on ever being able to get it repaired or replaced.
- The cord is stiff & heavy which inhibits the ability to manipulate the pen easily while working.
- The cord is permanently attached to the handpiece. Should the handpiece break or there are issues with the cord, the entire handpiece with attached cord would have to be sent to be fixed (if you can even find a place to fix it). With a detachable cord you would just have to replace the broken component. The terminals on the burner where the cord gets plugged in are too close together & very difficult to tighten.
- The power switch is on the side of the box making it a bit difficult to find while you are working.
- The box is a bit compact with all the dials, switches, etc. in the front which are not easy to see while you are working. The top of the burner really should be sloped down with all the controls easily visible while working.
- I never recommend interchangeable tips, especially for people who will be burning on a regular bases. While they are cheaper than buying fixed-tip handpieces they are a nuisance to change, it has a tendency to loosen while working & you have an extra connection (rather than a solid welded tip) that can impact on the overall performance. Interchangeable are farther away from the grip giving the user a less control over the burn.
- Grip is not cushioned & very uncomfortable.
- They do not offer traditional handpieces to use on the power supply.

- The Handpiece is bulky & uncomfortable especially for people with small hands (it weighs 1-5/8 oz. vs Razertip Heavy-Duty handpiece weighing 5/8 oz. It may not seem like much until you spend an hour or more working.
- Handpiece is not vented which would aid in keeping the handpiece cooler while working.
- Handpiece holder is plastic & difficult to get the handpiece in without it sliding around on the table. There is also the potential for it to melt when trying to manipulate the handpiece into the holder.
- Tips are a bit slower to heat & recover.
- Tips are not polished which inhibits the tips from flowing smoothly on the surface & more difficult to keep clean.
- The tips are 80/20 nickel/chrome. Overall performance would be better with a higher percentage of chrome.
- Tips styles are very small & they do not have tip styles suitable for general pyrography.
- Over-priced (even with the “sale” price) for a product made in China.

## Things I Would Change:

- Use a cord that is not permanently attached to the handpiece & change the insulation type on the cord to one that is more flexible & lighter .
- Make the box a bit larger with **all the controls** in the front so it is easily visible while working.
- Attach handpiece clip(s) to the top or sides of the burner so it’s easily accessible & will not move around while trying to insert the handpieces.
- Offer an option for fixed-tip handpieces such as the traditional handpieces used with detail burners.
- Use a more “cushy” grip, such as foam so it’s more comfortable.
- Use a lighter weight material for the handpieces & make them less bulky so it is more comfortable to use & suitable for people with small or large hands.
- Tips should be polished & higher percentage of chrome for better performance & easier to clean.
- Shorten the nib holder so the tip is closer to the grip to improve the control of the tip while working.
- Offer more versatile tips & tips in larger sizes that are suitable for general pyrography & gourd work.
- Drop the price. It’s overpriced compared to similar units manufactured in North America. You can’t compare the quality & workmanship of tools made in China vs. those made in North America.

## Similarities & comparisons to burners I have used & sold over the years

Over the years I have used & owned all of these burners at one time or another: Colwood, Optima, Nibsburner & Razertip. I will try to offer some comparison’s in how the TRUEArt compares.

### Interchangeable tips:

- I have never liked Interchangeable tips for a variety of reasons TRUEArt has made an improvement in the connection that they use vs what some manufacturers are using that makes it more stable so chances are tips will not wear out faster & there will be better heat flow.
- Optima does not make Interchangeable tips.
- I have used Colwood & Razertip’s Interchangeable tips & those are what I will use as a comparison. Colwood & Razertip’s interchangeable tips place your hand farther away from the grip making it a little bit more difficult to manipulate the tip & you will have less control.
- The connection on Colwood’s tips are such that the connection will begin to loosen up over time which will impact on the heat flow & the tips will wear out faster.
- Razertip & TRUEArt’s interchangeable tips have better connections & will be more secure in the handpiece so there would not be as much of an issue with loss of heat & they will not wear out as fast but the both place the tip too far from the handpiece grip & tips can (& have) loosened while you are working.

- All of the interchangeable tip handpieces place your tip farther away from the handpiece grip than is optimal for optimal control of the tip & your burning. TRUEArt's is worse than Colwood or Razertip's.
- All brands of interchangeable tips require you to connect & re-connect them to your handpiece when you want to change tip styles which requires a tool. You also need to wait until the tips cool to remove them. I find that annoying. The only pro to interchangeable tips is that they are cheaper however you lose the ability to quickly change tip styles. The only way to avoid that is to have several extra handpieces so might as well just buy fixed- tip handpieces because most pyrographer's only use 3 tip styles.
- Overall performance on fixed-tip handpieces is better, easier to connect & disconnect, there's no need to let the tips cool & most burners have handpiece holders for you to place the pens to let the tip cool.

### **Handpiece Holders:**

I found TRUEArt's holder a real challenge to use. Unlike other brands it is not attached to the burner & they just sit on the table top. They are plastic & the way it's designed it is a challenge trying to get the handpiece into the hole without it hitting the sides & melting the plastic. They are very light weight & have nothing on the bottom to keep them from moving around the table when you are trying to insert the handpieces into the holder. ..very inconvenient!

Here's some comparison's:

- \* Colwood Olympiad which offers a "hot pen" does not have a handpiece holder that accommodates the "hot pen".
- \* Burnmaster which offers a "hot pen" has handpiece holders on top of the power supply to accommodate the "hot pen or traditional handpieces
- \* Optima & Razertip do not have handpiece holders to accommodate "hot pens" nor do they make "hot pens".

### **Handpieces & Grips:**

- \* Burnmaster offers craft style "hot pens. I have used Burnmaster in the past with other brands of handpieces but I have never used their "hot pens" so I don't know what the grip is made of or how comfortable it is to use.
- \* Colwood offers "hot knife" with attached cord as well as traditional handpieces with cork as a standard grip but they offer foam grips for \$1.00 more. Their "hot knife" looks very similar to the design of the TRUEArt handpiece so I'm assuming this was used as a "go by". While I have used Colwood's traditional handpieces I have no personal experience with this handpiece. The cork on the traditional handpieces are hard & uncomfortable so I do recommend the optional foam grips. The handpiece itself is a comfortable size to use but can get hot at higher temperatures. There is no venting in traditional handpieces.
- \* Razertip makes only traditional handpieces that come with foam grips which provide the most comfort & the handpiece is a very comfortable for large or small hands. They are vented to help keep the handpiece cool.
- \* Optima handpieces come standard with foam grips which are very comfortable. The handpiece size if comfortable for any size hand but it is not vented so it can get a bit hot when burning at higher temperatures.
- \* TRUEArt grip is very firm & hard on the hands. It does not have a foam or cork grip. The handpiece itself is a bit heavy & thick & I found it very uncomfortable to use for more than a few minutes. I also found it difficult to maneuver because of the stiffness in the attached cord. My husband has larger hands & had no problems holding it but also found the attached cord to be too stiff.

### **Tips:**

I always recommend polished tips because they glide more smoothly on the surface, they require less cleaning & are easier to clean. .

- \* Colwood has a wide variety of tip styles & for every need & they offer both interchangeable tips & fixed-tip handpieces. Their tips comes unpolished but you can get polished tips for an additional \$3.00. Having used their version of a polished tip it is not nearly as polished as Optima & Razertip & does not perform as well. I do not know the percentage of nickel/chrome but based on their performance their tips do have a higher percentage of nickel.
- \* Optima has a wide variety of tip styles & sizes & they all come with highly polished tips. The tips have a higher percentage of chrome to nickel but I do not know the percentages. They perform very well with no drag. They do not make interchangeable tips.

- \* Razertip has the widest variety of tip styles, sizes & some exclusive specialized tip styles. All are highly polished & same ratio of chrome/nickel as Optima & perform the same as Optima. They also perform very well with no drag. They offer interchangeable tips & fixed-tip handpieces.
- \* TRUEArt has a very limited line of tips & almost all too tiny for general pyrography. They are not polished & contain a ratio of 80/20 nickel/chrome. Very similar in performance to Colwood unpolished tips but they are not suitable for general pyrography because they are all too small to be very functional. Compared to similar tips, Colwood's tip are much more suitable for all types of pyrography because they offer a variety of sizes.

### Controls:

- \* Colwood's Olympiad, which is comparable in that accommodates a "hot pen" but does not offer a digital display. Their Galaxy is the only one that offers a digital . The power supply of both are shaped like a box but all controls are in the front & they are easily visible & accessible while working . I have not personally used these units but it appears that the cords plug into the back of the burners. The digital display of the Galaxy is in the front but it is recessed so I'm not sure how visible it is while using it.
- \* Optima's power supply is basically a square box with the front panel straight up & down. The controls are not as visible when working but everything is easily accessible from the front.
- \* Razertip has a sloped top panel on the power supply that makes all the controls visible & easily accessible while working.
- \* TRUEArt is a small (too small) box with a flat top. The on/off switch is on the side & not visible while working. The rest of the controls are in front & not easily visible or accessible. The digital display is very difficult to view while working due to the overhang, the "frame" around the digital display & the display itself which is recessed from the face of the box. The terminals where you connect the cord are so close together it makes it very difficult to turn the connector to tighten it even with small hands like myself. The box should be a bit bigger to allow some "finger room" to connect & unconnect the terminals easily. It would also allow the power switch to be moved to the front (where in my opinion, it belongs).

### My Conclusions:

While I wish I could say I like the **TRUEArt burner that I tested** I do not. This is not a true detail burner with a traditional handpiece that uses wire tips. This is a hybrid with a power supply that accommodates a craft style "hot pen" & uses wire tips. They do not make traditional handpieces which are far more comfortable. The Burnmaster Eagle & Hawk & the Colwood Olympiad power supply's accommodate both the traditional style handpieces & the "craft style hot pens" & they both make both styles of handpieces. I think he's taken some good features from Burnmaster & Colwood's "hot pens" & tried to use them but fails by not offering a traditional handpiece & he has a very limited tip assortment, none of which are useful & the big difference in that it's made in China.

Considering that this unit is manufactured in China I think this unit is overpriced ("sale" 242.95) & comes with 2 "hot pens" & 20 (not very useful tips) compared to the **Burnmaster Eagle** (dual output) which comes with 2 "hot pens" & 10 tips that uses interchangeable wire tips & can use traditional handpieces (\$259.95) & the **Colwood Olympiad** (single output) comes with 1 "hot pen" & 2 tips (\$225.00). I have not tested these but just the fact that they have been around for a very long time & the tools are made in the USA would give them an edge in quality vs one made in China.

Another concern I have is how can you build a business marketing products that you have only played with as a child but never used as an adult to do general pyrography?

I told him up front that I was going to be very honest & candid with him all along the way in my review....good, bad or indifferent & that I would not show any "preferential" treatment to the brand that I personally use & sell.

If it were me, I never would have brought these to market until I knew all about pyrography myself, all about the tools & how to use them & I would ensure that everything was working properly before selling them to the public. I would also have reached out to "experts" general pyrography, BEFORE THEY WERE MADE AVAILABLE FOR SALE, to test them

out & make recommendations & suggestions. Putting the cart before the horse is why so many tools are being returned & you can't stay in business if you have to replace a lot of products.

#### **How I put it through the paces & my personal opinion of the power supply , tips & the handpieces:**

Pavel was very gracious to make the 2 tip styles I primarily use so I could honestly evaluate how they performed compared to the ones I use regularly. I used several varieties of wood & all pieces had been very finely sanded (I use 3 different grits to make sure they are very smooth. Because the tips were not polished they did not perform nearly as well as the Razertip counterparts initially. The tips dragged & did not flow along the surface of the wood smoothly. So, after my initial testing my husband took the tips to his shop & polished them for me. They performed much better & I was able to do my "smooth shading" much easier. The tips glided across the wood smoothly as they should without any drag.

Since the tips were quite a bit farther from my handpiece grip I had difficulty getting good control of the burn & my hand was not in a comfortable position compared to a fixed-tip handpiece where the tip is closer to where you grip the pen which also makes the position of your hand would be at a more comfortable angle while burning.

I also found the handpiece very uncomfortable & I could not hold onto it very long without stopping for a while. The handpiece is a bit on the heavy side, larger in diameter (like a craft burner) & the grip was hard & uncomfortable compared to the grips on most traditional handpieces made for detail burners. The grip on this was neither cork or foam. This would be a big factor for anyone with smaller hands or arthritis.

All of his tips are very tiny & not suitable for general pyrography. When asked why they were so small he said that he had seen pyrography on jewelry & liked it so he made them for jewelry. The only tip styles I saw that were suitable for general pyrography were the ones that came on the handpieces which were the equivalent of a SMALL writing tip.

#### **Some personal opinions:**

Both I & my husband get the feeling that this burner is a craft burner trying to be a detail burner...or I might call it a hybrid. Perhaps it's because the handpiece is large, heavy & cumbersome like a craft burner. It would have been better if he offered traditional style handpieces like Burnmaster & Colwood offer for their burners that are made to accommodate "hot pens".

He has already sold several burners on Amazon but I would hope that he would take them off the market until he can get the quality improved to the point that it is reliable & performing as it should. I also feel that he needs to seriously work on the tips which are pretty worthless for general pyrography. He should offer tips that are polished & most important...useful sizes & styles for general pyrography.

He has already had a lot of burners returned due to quality control issues & because he doesn't manufacture anything himself he is having to replace them. While his customer service is excellent, having to replace tools frequently is not good for business both financially & the reputation of the burner & company. I think he was very premature in offering them for sale to the public until all the kinks were worked out. These tools certainly are not ready for "Prime time" in many ways.

As the "new kid on the block", he's got a ways to go to make TRUEArt woodburning tools competitive with what's already on the market, especially those that are manufactured in North America

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