

MOM'S JOY ROOM

2964 Fairmont Road, Morgantown, WV 26501 | (304) 282-3671

CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Vintage Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Horse Sculpture — Rearing Pose on Warm Wood Base — Thailand



MARKET VALUE

\$75.00 – \$150.00

Realistic retail/private sale replacement value range for a vintage 10" Thai horn carving in excellent preservation.

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$150.00 – \$275.00

Collector's valuation range reflecting the exceptional carving detail, dynamic pose, and rich natural horn gradient.



*Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Horse
Rearing/Prancing Stance • 10" Tall
Thailand • c. Mid-20th Century
Mounted on Polished Oval Wood Base*

Vintage Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Horse Sculpture

Authentic Water Buffalo Horn — Exceptional Anatomical Detail — Wood Base — Thailand • c. 1950s–1970s

HISTORY

The tradition of water buffalo horn carving in Thailand and Southeast Asia is a profound folk craft deeply intertwined with the region's agricultural history. For centuries, the water buffalo (known in Thai as *khwai*) has been the cornerstone of rural life, plowing paddy fields, providing transport, and acting as a symbol of patience, resilience, and wealth. When these revered animals died of natural causes, rural communities honored their service by utilizing every part of the animal. The horns, which are dense, durable, and naturally polished by years of outdoor life, became a highly favored medium for regional artisans.

Unlike bone or antler, water buffalo horn is composed of keratin—the same fibrous protein found in claws, hooves, and hair. This organic composition makes the horn thermoplastic, a unique characteristic that lies at the heart of the craft of horn carving. To work the horn, a master craftsman must first heat it over an open flame, in boiling water, or in hot oil. This heat

softens the keratin, allowing the artisan to bend, flatten, stretch, or reshape the curved horn. Once the horn is molded into the rough, general posture of the intended sculpture—such as the dramatic rearing stance of a horse—it is cooled rapidly to lock the structural form. From this prepared block, the carver uses specialized chisels, scrapers, and fine knives to meticulously sculpt the fine details.

In Thai culture and Buddhist iconography, the horse (*ma*) holds exceptional significance as a symbol of speed, strength, nobility, and rapid advancement. The horse is celebrated in Buddhist lore as Kanthaka, the loyal steed of Prince Siddhartha, who carried the prince out of his palace gates to embark on his journey toward enlightenment. In secular Thai art, a rearing or prancing horse, with its front legs raised dramatically in the air, represents dynamic vital energy, successful ambitions, and the triumph of the spirit. A horse sculpture is thus considered highly auspicious, believed to bring momentum and success to its owner's endeavors.

One of the most remarkable features of genuine water buffalo horn is its natural color variation. A single horn typically transitions from a solid, dense, deep charcoal or jet-black at the pointed tip to a translucent cream, honey, or ivory tone near the wider, hollow base. An expert Thai carver does not merely work against this variation; they masterfully plan the sculpture to align with it. In this exceptional horse sculpture, the natural color gradient is used to brilliant artistic effect, transitioning beautifully from the deep dark grey and black shades at the top of the horse's head and mane down to a warm cream and ivory at the lower body and legs, accentuating the muscular form and the sense of light catching the rearing animal.

During the mid-20th century, particularly between the 1950s and 1970s, Thailand experienced a golden era for its export handicraft market. As international travel expanded and Western interest in Southeast Asian art flourished, skilled carving communities in Central and Northern Thailand (specifically around Chiang Mai) began producing high-quality decorative carvings of elephants, horses, and birds for global collectors. These vintage mid-century pieces, securely mounted on rich, warm wooden bases, are celebrated today for their superior hand-carved detail and represent a historical high-water mark for Thai export craftsmanship, showcasing an extraordinary level of patience and hand-tool dexterity that is rarely encountered in

modern mass production.

NOTABLE INFORMATION

- ♦ **Material:** Genuine organic water buffalo horn (carved from a single piece of horn — NOT bone, NOT resin — confirmed by natural color gradient, fibrous grain structure, and translucent edges).
- ♦ **Pose & Aesthetics:** Dynamic rearing/prancing pose with front legs raised dramatically, symbolizing vital energy, power, and high status.
- ♦ **Carving Precision:** Exceptional hand-carved detail, including individually defined muscle groups, flowing mane strands, detailed tail, and highly expressive facial features.
- ♦ **Base:** Sturdily mounted on a warm, polished wood oval base that complements the natural honey-toned highlights of the horn.
- ♦ **Dimensions:** Approximately 10" tall (including wooden base), providing a commanding and prominent display presence.
- ♦ **Origin & Age:** Handcrafted in Thailand; vintage mid-20th century (c. 1950s–1970s), representing the classic era of premium Thai handicrafts.
- ♦ **Condition:** Excellent vintage preservation with a rich natural luster, sound structural integrity, and secure original mounting.

Collector's Note: When collecting vintage Southeast Asian organic carvings, distinguishing genuine water buffalo horn from modern resin or plastic reproductions is paramount. Authentic horn can be verified by inspecting its natural structure: it displays an irregular, organic grain pattern, subtle growth rings, and a distinct color gradient that transitions seamlessly from dense dark charcoal to a semi-translucent cream or warm amber. Under close examination, genuine horn will also show tiny, microscopic fibrous layers, and thinner carved sections (such as the ears or mane edges) will exhibit a delicate, warm translucency when back-lit. Resin reproductions, by contrast, feel uniform in temperature, lack organic grain, display identical coloring throughout, and often show mold seams or tiny trapped air bubbles. Mid-century Thai hand-carved horn sculptures are highly sought after by collectors of folk art and equestrian decor. The rearing horse, with its expressive anatomical carving and dramatic posture, represents the pinnacle of this vintage craft category, offering a striking blend of natural beauty and artisan

mastery.

*"A majestic creature frozen in a moment of untamed
grace, carved from the very earth to capture the
spirit of strength and beauty."*

Mom's Joy Room | Sandy Wade, Proprietor
Certificate Issued: July 2026

Sandy Wade, Proprietor

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