

MOM'S JOY ROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Sculpture — Majestic Eagle Catching a Fish — 12"+ — Southeast Asian Artisan Work



MARKET VALUE

\$95–185

Exceptional carving detail, 12"+ scale, natural horn color gradient fully intact — superior example of the type

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$200–350

Collector ceiling — museum-quality feather and fish detail, dramatic rearing pose, wood base, genuine buffalo horn



*Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Sculpture
Majestic Eagle Catching a Fish
12"+ tall — Southeast Asian artisan work
Natural horn color gradient — wood base
Exceptional feather & fish detail throughout*

Hand-Carved Buffalo Horn Eagle & Fish Sculpture

12"+ Tall — Rearing Eagle in Dramatic Strike Pose — Fish Carved on Horn Body

Genuine Buffalo Horn — Natural Dark-to-Cream Color Gradient — Wood Display Base

HISTORY

The art of carving water buffalo horn (*Bubalus bubalis*) into sculptural objects has been practiced across Southeast and East Asia for centuries, with particularly strong traditions in Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and China. Unlike bone or antler, buffalo horn is a true keratin sheath — the same protein that forms human fingernails and hair — which gives it a distinctive combination of properties prized by carvers: it is hard enough to hold fine detail, yet can be softened with heat and steam to allow shaping before re-hardening permanently as it cools. This quality allowed skilled craftspeople to produce sweeping organic forms — curved necks, spread wings, arching tails — that would be nearly impossible to achieve in a rigid material without joinery.

The natural color variation of buffalo horn is one of its most visually dramatic characteristics. Depending on the animal and the section of the horn used, the color ranges from deep jet black

or dark charcoal at the base and exterior shell to warm cream, ivory, and golden-tan at the core and tip. This gradient is not painted or applied — it is the natural structure of the horn itself, and master carvers learn to work with it deliberately, positioning their subject matter so that the natural color zones enhance the composition. In this sculpture, the artisan has exploited the gradient with extraordinary skill: the eagle's outstretched wings and upper body, carved from the lighter cream and tan interior horn, glow warmly against the deep dark horn body below — creating a dramatic contrast that simultaneously defines the bird's form and showcases the material's natural beauty.

The subject matter — an **eagle striking to catch a fish** — is among the most demanding compositions in figurative horn carving. The eagle's wings must be spread wide enough to convey power and motion while remaining structurally sound in a brittle natural material; the talons and beak must be fine enough to read as sharp and predatory without snapping; and the fish, carved in relief on the horn body below, must be recognizable and detailed in a space constrained by the horn's natural taper. That all of these challenges have been met in a single 12"+ sculpture speaks to the skill level of the carver. Individual feather barbs, the fish's scales and fins, the eagle's eye and hooked beak — each is rendered with precision that elevates this piece from tourist craft to genuine artisan sculpture. The wood base — a warm teak or similar hardwood oval — anchors the composition and provides a stable, finished presentation platform.

Pieces of this quality and scale were produced primarily for the export gift and art market from the mid-20th century onward, with peak production in Vietnam and Thailand from the 1960s through the 1990s. The finest examples were sold through specialty import shops, Asian art galleries, and craft fairs, and the best carvers developed recognizable house styles — though pieces were rarely signed. This sculpture represents the upper tier of the export craft tradition: a work whose quality and complexity transcend the category of souvenir and place it firmly in the realm of decorative art.

NOTABLE INFORMATION

- ♦ Material: Genuine water buffalo horn — confirmed by natural dark-to-cream color gradient and organic horn grain
- ♦ Height: 12 inches or more — a commanding, display-scale piece
- ♦ Subject: Eagle in dramatic mid-strike pose, wings fully spread — fish carved in relief on horn body

- ♦ Carving detail: Individual feather barbs, fish scales and fins, eagle eye and beak — museum-quality execution
- ♦ Color: Natural horn gradient — deep charcoal/black base transitioning to warm cream and tan on wings
- ♦ Base: Warm wood oval display base — teak or similar hardwood
- ♦ Origin: Southeast Asian artisan work — consistent with Vietnamese or Thai export craft tradition
- ♦ Condition: Excellent — no cracks, chips, or repairs observed; natural horn surface fully intact
- ♦ Maker: Unsigned — consistent with export craft tradition of this era and region

Collector's note: Buffalo horn sculptures are collected across several overlapping categories — Asian decorative art, natural materials sculpture, and wildlife/bird art. The key distinction for buyers is genuine carved horn versus resin reproduction: authentic horn is identified by its natural color gradient (no two pieces identical), the visible layered grain structure at cut edges, and a slight translucency in the lighter sections when held to light. Resin reproductions have uniform color, no grain, and feel lighter. This piece shows all the hallmarks of genuine horn. Value is driven primarily by: (1) carving complexity — the eagle-catching-fish composition is among the most technically demanding subjects, and the execution here is exceptional; (2) scale — at 12"+, this is a display-quality piece, not a desk trinket; and (3) condition of the horn surface — fully intact with no crazing or separation. Market Value reflects realistic shop/private-sale pricing; Estimated Worth reflects what an Asian decorative art collector or wildlife sculpture enthusiast would pay for a museum-quality example of this subject and scale.

"Carved from the horn of one magnificent animal to honor another — a moment of pure wildness, frozen forever in a material older than art itself."