

LANGFORDS

Antique & Contemporary Silver

Pair of antique continental silver pheasants

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£4,300



REF: 9309

Height: 175 mm (6.89")

Width: 460 mm (18.11")

Weight: 1409 g

Description

Pair of impressive, large and finely detailed antique silver pheasants, crafted from 830 standard German silver, probably in Hanau. These imposing game bird models are beautifully hand chased in fine detail, to give a lifelike effect, and in excellent condition.

The heads of the pheasants are detachable which is common for animal models of this age. During the late 19th century a thriving industry had built up in Germany and Holland, making silver models for the British market. From traditional game birds to knights in armour and nefs (model ships on wheels). These models were made in sterling silver (925) and each imported piece was usually sent to a UK assay office to be tested and stamped with import hallmarks.

During this period, a minor trade war broke out in Europe with England imposing a tax on luxury goods, including silver models. To legally avoid this punitive tax, enterprising workshops in Germany and Holland adapted their designs of animals, ships and birds, making them into vessels. Ships were made into two parts, hull and deck with masts and rigging; while birds and animals had removable heads. Suddenly they were no longer not luxury items; considered useful. This ploy persisted into the early 20th century, when the tax was removed.

Dimensions given are for the cock and total weight for both birds. The hen is 6¼" (160mm) tall and 17½" (445mm) long.