



## Pair Of Sternposts - Louis XIV Period



17 500 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Solid wood

Height : 111

### Description

Exceptional Pair of Stern Terms - Louis XIV Period. A remarkable and rare pair of carved solid oak stern terms from a prestigious French ship of the Louis XIV period. These sculptures depict two crowned figures holding coats of arms, forming an iconographic pair intended to symmetrically adorn the stern of a warship or armed merchant vessel. The first figure measures 111 cm in height, the second 109 cm, with an average thickness of 25 to 30 cm. They are carved from high-quality solid European oak, a dense and heavy wood characteristic of oaks from royal forests. The tight growth rings visible at the base indicate a mature tree, probably from a royal forest intended for shipbuilding. The sculpture is carved in the round with a recessed back to reduce weight and facilitate attachment to the

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ship. The two figures of noble rank wear crenellated crowns adorned with traces of polychromy and visible gilding. Their long, wavy hair is sculpted with great finesse, and their faces possess noble and majestic features. A subtle but intentional differentiation distinguishes the two figures: the larger one has four curls of hair, while the smaller one has three. This deliberate variation suggests the representation of a couple, probably the shipowner and his wife, or male and female guardian figures. Each figure holds before it a shield bearing the same coat of arms: a gilt St. Andrew's cross on a red field. The polychromy is a later addition and obscures the coat of arms originally present on the face of the shields. Only a few traces of it are visible beneath the current polychromy. The state of preservation is remarkable considering the age of the pieces and their exposure to the marine elements. The sculptures remain complete and stable, with only minor losses to the tips of the crowns and bases, and no major invasive restoration has been carried out. The geographical attribution points to France, most likely an Atlantic naval base such as Brest, Rochefort, or Lorient. The period of creation is between 1680 and 1730, covering the second half of Louis XIV's reign. Their dimensions of approximately 110 cm suggest they adorned a prestigious merchant ship or a medium-tonnage warship, estimated at between 300 and 600 tons, belonging to a noble shipowner or a high-ranking naval officer. These stern terms, the correct technical term for this type of sculpture, were fixed symmetrically on the ship's aft gallery, on either side of the windows of the main cabin. They served several functions: heraldic, by displaying the owner's coat of arms for identification and prestige; decorative, as an ornament of the stern and an element of prestige for the ship; symbolic, as tutelary figures protecting the vessel; and social, by manifesting the shipowner's noble status and wealth. The rarity of this set is exceptional. Naval sculptures from this period are extremely rare on the market,

as most ships were dismantled, and few sculpted elements have survived outside of museum collections. The complete set of two terms from the same ship is even rarer. The stylistic and iconographic consistency is remarkable, and the subtle variations in height and number of buckles demonstrate a unified design by the same sculptor. The quality of the carving testifies to the work of a royal arsenal workshop or a skilled sculptor, with a finesse in the modeling of the faces and drapery characteristic of French naval art at its height. The historical significance lies in the tangible evidence they provide of the classical French merchant or military navy, and their connection to the history of the royal arsenals and shipbuilding. The current mounting on modern red steel plinths is removable for ease of display. These plinths were custom-made for each figure. These exceptional sculptures, remarkable for their presence and rarity, will delight any lover of nautical objects or decorate a property in a manner befitting their stature.