

Buffalo *Collection*

BRINGING BUFFALO BACK TO THE RANGE

For some, filling a house with the things that make it a home is all about thrift and function. Pretty things and baubles plucked from the shelves of the nearest discount store are hung, laid and placed without regard for where it came from or whose hands have worked to create it.

For others, creating a home is about creating a story. Every piece of furniture and each work of art is mindfully chosen to reflect who they are, where they have been, and what they strive to become.

From family heirlooms to travel remembrances, these people recognize that “home” is not so much a place, but an expression of the heart and soul.

From behind the doors of their Old Town Scottsdale Buffalo Collection storefront, Laura and Michael Levenberg are not only pairing people with beautiful, one-of-a-kind furniture and décor finds; they’re helping to restore an important piece of American tradition crucial to our land and our history.

It all began with a herd of buffalo.



Writer Amanda Christmann
Photographer Lorelei Lazurek



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The details are what make the greatest difference, especially when they are created by someone we know personally, and they're a master craftsman.

Laura Levenberg

Buffalo operate entirely differently. They move as they graze, leaving root systems intact and fertilizing the land as they travel. Reintroduction of buffalo to the land was the perfect natural solution.

Before long, there were too many bison to be sustained by the land, so the creation of a buffalo meat business became necessary to humanely thin the herd. With that came an excess of gorgeous buffalo hides.

Not only were the hides beautiful, they were also twice as thick, 40 percent stronger, and higher in collagen than cattle hides, which made them softer and more supple. As fate would have it, a fourth-generation Colorado furniture maker was visiting the ranch on a hunting trip. It was the perfect opportunity to design the first heirloom quality furniture pieces using buffalo hides for the ranch houses. As people visited the ranch, they took notice of the exquisite sofas and chairs and wanted similar pieces for their own homes. Thus, the furniture business began.

Every facet was a tenable circle of life. Buffalo were thriving, the land was renewed, and every part of the buffalo was being put to good use at the end of their life cycle. In keeping with commitment to the environment, a “wet-white,” non-chromium, earth-friendly tanning process was used.

About a day's drive from the Valley of the Sun in the shadow of Mt. Lamborn in western Colorado is a little cranny of the planet where artisans and fiercely independent folks have been drawn for years. Among them was a botanist named Julie Littlefield, who purchased a 9,000-acre parcel called Scenic Mesa Ranch and set out to restore the land's plants and native animals. After doing some research, she learned that the best way to do that was to introduce something long gone from Western ranges: buffalo.

Cattle, it turns out, are hard on the land. They tend to graze in one place for as long as possible, pulling grasses by their roots stripping the land acre by acre.





It may have been furniture that was being sold, but what was really happening was the telling of the story of the American West—one of glory and tragedy, and one with an opportunity to right a small part of what went so terribly wrong.

Michael and Laura shared a love for the history of the West and the freedom it represented. They met Littlefield while they ran an art gallery in Aspen, and they became enchanted with the ranch and its mission to renew passion for bison.

They loved and believed in the mission so much that they decided to get involved. With a herd management plan and meat and furniture businesses in place, the entire herd of buffalo would benefit, as would thousands of people who, in big ways and small, would make the buffalo part of their lives.

The first Buffalo Collection showroom opened in Colorado in 2009. By 2011, Michael and Laura were ready to open Buffalo Collection in Old Town Scottsdale. Since then, they have expanded their showroom twice.

Buffalo Collection

Michael and Laura have taken the original plan to the next level with Buffalo Collection.

Their showroom, situated among the art galleries and trending restaurants of Old Town Scottsdale's East Fifth Avenue, is full of wonderfully unexpected pieces created by their "collection" of nearly 50 artists, many of whom are celebrated at artists' receptions throughout the year.



It's a nod to their roots in fine art, and a tip of the hat to the many styles, from rustic to mid-century modern, that excite their customers. Every piece of buffalo leather furniture is handcrafted to the customer's specifications, making each creation a one-of-a-kind, personalized find.

Original glasswork, live edge wood tables, Western photography, paintings, leather handbags and pillows, one-of-a-kind lighting and more offer a full array to choose from. It's entirely possible to fill a home with handcrafted, finds—the stuff that family heirlooms are made of—without leaving the store.

"Everything we do is handcrafted in America," Michael said. "We have lots of talented folks here, and we love that we can give them opportunities and put them to work."



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Buffalo Collection

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Buffalo Collection is also the kind of experience many tourists and winter visitors love; it's the perfect place to find a distinctive, heirloom quality keepsake to remind them of their time here. White glove delivery service enables people around the globe to have items shipped home, no matter where they live.

The star of the showroom floor is, of course, gorgeous buffalo leather sofas, armchairs, barstools, benches and more.

Buffalo Collection shows off a variety of designs that you can sit in and feel for yourself how each piece is smooth as butter, soft and sophisticated. They offer 40-50 colors of rich buffalo leather, from deep, rustic leathers to pastels, and custom leatherwork, metalwork and finishes make every creation a reflection of its owner.

Buffalo Collection doesn't have to be all about new pieces, either. Their

craftsmen are experts at redesigning antiques.

“The details are what make the greatest difference,” said Laura, “especially when they are created by someone we know personally, and they're a master craftsman.”

“Everything boils down to the fact that it's heirloom quality,” Michael added. “People leave here knowing they only have to buy something once; it lasts a lifetime.”

“It's come full-circle,” Michael said with a proud smile. “What started with preserving the land and preserving the buffalo is now a system of sustainability in which each piece supports the next.”

It's something else too. It's a remarkable combination of tradition and ingenuity, and it's a new twist to an age-old story that we can all be proud to tell.

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