

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Brough Superior: The 'Rolls-Royce of Motorcycles'](#)



There's growing enthusiasm among the exceptionally wealthy for acquiring motorcycles as artwork, but it still seemed slightly odd to see an historically important Brough Superior among the lots at Phillips de Pury's 'Design Masters' auction in New York on December 15, alongside furniture by Marc Newson, Philippe Starck and Le Corbusier.

Almost as surprising was the hefty \$600,000 - 700,000 estimate which, had it been reached, would have made the 1925 prototype Alpine Grand Sport - as successfully raced by Brough himself - the most expensive motorcycle ever sold at auction. In the event there was but a single bid of \$450,000 and the bike was returned to collector Michael FitzSimons, its owner of the past 25 years.

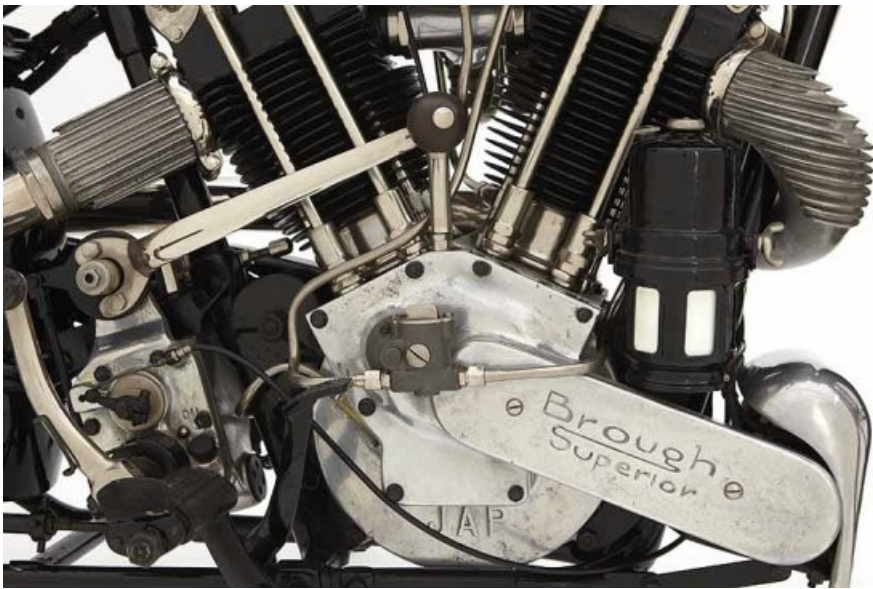
There is still no denying, however, that Broughs are among the most valuable motorcycles on the planet - the most paid for one at auction so far is £286,000 and rumour has it that the first factory prototype changed hands privately for around £500,000. During Brough Superior's 21-year existence (1919 - 1940), its most celebrated customer was T.E. Lawrence who died on one (the sixth he had owned) after swerving to avoid two boys on bicycles in a lane near his Dorset home. That specific machine is now judged to be worth £1 million.



Such figures make the superbly engineered replicas now available from Brough aficionado Mark Upham seem extremely good value. Upham, who has sold around 50 genuine Broughs through his Austrian-based bike business British Only Austria, is generally reluctant to bandy prices around, but the received wisdom is that his replicas change hands for around £150,000 - for which you get a 21st Century Brough that looks just like the original, but is a whole lot better built.

Upham's 'recreations' contain few English-made components because he has some of the best engineering facilities in the world virtually on his doorstep - some casts come from a workshop just an hour away that produces parts for Lamborghini and Audi; engine crankcases are made across the border in Germany and the frames have been designed and stress-tested at Austria's Leoben University.

One particular fan is incurable petrolhead Jay Leno, who rode one at Pebble Beach.



"To see a brand new one [Brough Superior] was stunning," Leno said afterwards.

"Everything was just as it would have been in 1925. To be able to thrash it as you would a new motorcycle back in the day was pretty amazing. It was a real thrill."

If only an original will do, however, Gloucestershire-based Iconic Motorcycles is offering a rare Pendine racing model, named after the Brough that took first and second places at the 1928 Pendine one-mile sprint race, at an asking price of around £200,000.

Well, Broughs are the 'Rolls-Royce of motorcycles' after all.

For further information, visit:

Brough Superior Motorcycles, +43 7586 744610 www.brough-superior.com.

Iconic Motorcycles, +44 (0) 1451 810070 www.iconicmotorcycles.com.

*Text - Simon de Burton
Photos - Phillips de Pury*

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