

Savoy dynasty daily life on display with Geneva auction

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The House of Savoy auction is expected to fetch as much as \$168,000.

Porcelain figurines, a white faux-leather sofa and a foosball table: these are among the items in a House of Savoy auction, providing a rare glimpse into the everyday life of royals.

More than 200 objects are going under the hammer this week, drawn from the former Geneva home of Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy—the son of the last king of Italy, Umberto II—and his wife Marina.

Royal aficionados may be interested in a delicate 18th century tea cup, a modernist game of chess, or two motorcycles owned by the couple's 51-year-old son, Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy.

A portion of the lots are being sold off online until September 18, while others will feature in an in-person auction two days later hosted by the Geneve Encheres auction house.

In all, the objects being sold by the couple are expected to fetch between 100,000 and 150,000 Swiss francs (\$112,000-\$168,000).

But Cyril Duval, a partner at Geneve Encheres, told AFP the value estimates were not really important, since the collection was more about "falling in love".

This auction, he said, "makes it possible for collectors to obtain certain objects they may have dreamt about after seeing them in magazines or on the screen".

The collection comprises of historical memorabilia and some [household items](#) from the villa the Savoy family had built in the 1970s in Vesenaz, on the outskirts of Geneva.

Vittorio Emanuele is the 86-year-old head of the House of Savoy, whose family was forced to leave Italy after the monarchy was abolished in 1946.



The auction includes a motorcycle used by Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, described as a '20th century rock and roll prince'

'Rock and roll'

Among the items for sale is "a 19th century dinner set used during a ball hosted by Queen Victoria in London City Hall", Duval said.

There are also objects linked to the Savoy family heritage, including engraved silver coat of arms and porcelain figurines, but also bronze statuettes recalling the modernist interior style of the Geneva villa.

The collection also includes items that are "much more pop", Duval said.

He highlighted one of the two motorcycles, a 1941 Indian Sport Scout, with an asking price of 15,000-20,000 Swiss francs (\$16,800-\$22,400).

"It belonged to crown prince Emanuele Filiberto, a 20th century rock and roll prince with tattooed arms," he said.

The grandson of Italy's last king, who is married to French actress Clotilde Courau, enjoyed riding his motorcycles with Johnny Hallyday, the late French rock legend, he added.

Duval explained that the auction was taking place after "the prince and princess left and sold" the Geneva villa this year, opting to stay in their residence in the luxury Swiss ski resort town of Gstaad instead.

Vittorio Emanuele was born in Naples in 1937, less than a decade before the monarchy ended and his family was forced to leave Italy.

He and other male heirs of the Savoy family were sent into exile because his grandfather Vittorio Emanuele III had collaborated with the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini on anti-Jewish laws during World War II.

Vittorio Emanuele III abdicated in May 1946 after 46 years on the throne, and his son Umberto II succeeded him, but only for a month before a June referendum abolished the monarchy.

The Italian parliament only ended a constitutional ban on the House of Savoy's male heirs returning to Italy in 2002, after Vittorio Emanuele and Emanuele Filiberto swore loyalty to the republic, but they have continued living mainly in Switzerland.

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