

One Giant Leap: Auction of Historic Vintage Space Photographs Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Project Apollo

For Immediate Release
14 October 2022

As NASA looks again to the moon 50 years after the final Apollo 17 mission, groundbreaking works from the collection of Victor Martin-Malburet offer a timely and historic invitation to reflect on the evolving legacy of Project Apollo and its resounding impacts on art, science, and human potential.



Lot 402 Harrison Schmitt, the Earth and the US flag, Eugene Cernan [Apollo 17], 7-19 December 1972, EVA 1 \$4,000-6,000

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Marking the 50th anniversary of the last human voyage to the moon, Wright and LAMA are pleased to present **One Giant Leap for Mankind: Vintage Photographs from the Victor Martin-Malburet Collection, Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Project Apollo (1961-1972)**, an auction to take place in Chicago on October 28th, 2022. This stunning collection comprises more than 300 original historic photographs from Project Apollo, the NASA program responsible for placing the first humans on the surface of the moon. Meticulously researched and collected over the course of 25 years by Victor Martin-Malburet, each image represents extraordinary feats of human exploration, imagination, and collaboration, and many of those being offered have never been published.

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Astronauts Turned Artists

Equipped with the most sophisticated cameras developed by Kodak, Hasselblad, and Zeiss for the unimaginably challenging conditions of space and lunar surface, Apollo astronauts were instructed with no ambiguity about the significance of photography to their mission: “If you get great photos, they’ll live forever,” summarized former NASA chief of photography Richard Underwood, “Your key to immortality is in the quality of the photograph and nothing else.” While the astronauts’ primary goal was to record their activities, the images that they created transcend documentation. It is not just the splendor of what is portrayed; there is also the sheer aesthetic appeal of the images.

“The [Apollo] astronauts are often presented as great scientists and heroes, but rarely are they hailed as some of the most significant photographers of all time. From the unknown, they brought back a new visual vocabulary. Through them, art broke free of gravity,” offers Martin-Malburet. “The breathtaking images of the James Webb Space Telescope released earlier this year remind us that the trajectories of space exploration and image technologies remain inextricably linked. In today’s digital era, it is easy to forget that Project Apollo and its extraordinary technical achievements took place when photography was still analog, requiring light-sensitive chemistry, film, and photographic papers.” Brimming with “firsts” and punctuated with every major visual milestone of the Golden Age of space exploration – many of which became instant cultural touchstones – **One Giant Leap** celebrates Project Apollo’s profound impact on art, science, and the human understanding of our place in the cosmos.

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Lot 430 [Large Format] The Blue Marble: First human-taken photograph of the full earth, Harrison Schmitt or Ronald Evans [Apollo 17], 7–19 December 1972 \$15,000–25,000

The Whole Picture

In order to see the whole Earth amidst the dark void of space, one must be at least 12,000 miles away from it—only 24 humans ever went that far into deep space, and they were the crews of nine Apollo missions between 1968 and 1972.

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For Project Apollo's grand finale, astronauts of the last human voyage to the moon captured the fully illuminated disk of Earth, the only humans to witness this view. Known as *The Blue Marble*, NASA image AS17-148-22727 was taken by Harrison Schmitt or Ronald Evans of Apollo 17 on December 7th, 1972, five hours after launch and 18,000 miles from Earth. There is still debate among astronauts about who snapped the most reproduced photograph in history. It has become a symbol of Earth's beauty, vulnerability, and isolation within the greater universe. **Lot 430** (\$15,000–25,000) in **One Giant Leap**, a large format vintage chromogenic print specially produced for presentation by NASA, is a true rarity – no human has since been far enough from Planet Earth to capture another whole-Earth image.

Five years before *The Blue Marble*, NASA unmanned satellite ATS 3 transmitted the first color photograph of the full Earth from outer space by means of a revolutionary onboard camera which prefigured digital technology. Considered one of the most important photographs ever taken, it was used for the iconic cover of the first *Whole Earth Catalogue*, the countercultural magazine founded by Stewart Brand and lionized by Steve Jobs. Brand had campaigned to have NASA release a then-rumored satellite image of the entire Earth as seen from space, convinced that a picture of the entire planet would change how humans related to their home. Printed in 1967, **Lot 174** (\$6,000–8,000) may be considered “the first selfie of mankind.”



Lot 206 [Large Format] *First Earthrise: the first color photograph of the first Earthrise witnessed by humans, William Anders [Apollo 8], 21–27 December 1968* \$12,000–18,000

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Earth Rising

Among the leading lots of **One Giant Leap** are the first images captured from space by the pioneering Mercury and Gemini astronauts. John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, was also the first human to carry a camera into space. **Lot 106** (\$5,000–7,000) taken by Glenn depicts the Earth's horizon and space from the Friendship 7 and is the first human-taken photograph from space. Gemini IV's Ed White, the first American spacewalker, was also the

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first human photographed floating freely above the Earth on June 3, 1965 (**Lot 120**, \$6,000–8,000), marking a turning point in the popular conception of manned space exploration.

Astronaut William Anders had the honor of photographing the exhilarating sight of Earthrise as Apollo 8 circumnavigated the Moon for the first time in December of 1968. **One Giant Leap** features rare photographs of the first Earthrise witnessed by humans including the iconic shot released by NASA and published on front covers after the mission, but printed here in its almost never-seen original square Hasselblad format (**Lot 192**, \$8,000–12,000) or large format version (**Lot 206**, \$12,000 –18,000) as well as another extraordinary shot, this one kept uncelebrated in NASA's archives (**Lot 194**, \$6,000–8,000). Subsequent views of Earthrise from the Apollo voyages will also be offered, including the only Earthrise photographed after transearth injection on Apollo 11 (**Lot 286**, \$6,000–8,000) and the last Earthrise witnessed on Apollo 17 (**Lot 425**, \$4,000–6,000).

The ultimate reversal of viewpoint was to see the Earth from the surface of another world. Apollo 11's Buzz Aldrin has the credit for the first photograph of the Earth from the lunar surface (**Lot 264**, \$3,000–5,000). According to Eugene Cernan, the last man on the Moon: "Looking back at the Earth is your identity with reality. It's home. It's where family and love and life really is, viewed from a vantage point a quarter of miles out in space where reality itself is almost a dream, a dream in which you are a very vulnerable character. I wonder what it would have been like to walk on the Moon and not have the Earth in the sky." **Lot 402** (\$4,000–6,000) has been described by NASA chief of photography Richard Underwood as "one of the greatest photos ever to come out of the space program." The striking image captures for the first time a human, Apollo 17 Harrison Schmitt, and the distant Earth in a single frame, together with the American flag, and was taken by Eugene Cernan.

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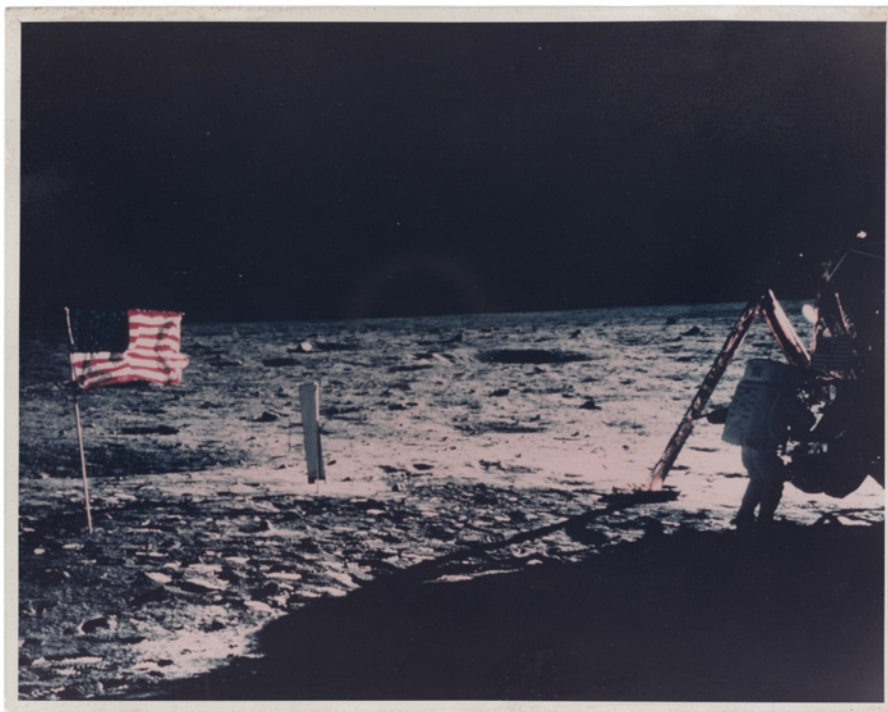
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Lot 289 [Large Format] The only photograph of Neil Armstrong on the Moon
Buzz Aldrin [Apollo 11], 16–24 July 1969 \$30,000–50,000

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A New World of Firsts, Lasts, Rarities ...and #Selfies

It is hard to overstate the unprecedented nature of many of the Project Apollo photographs, and two legendary rarities are among those offered in **One Giant Leap. Lot 249** (\$10,000–15,000) is the first human-taken photograph on the surface of another world, by Neil Armstrong. Signed by the Apollo 17 crew to NASA chief of photography Richard Underwood, Underwood himself described this image as “one of the most astounding photographs ever recorded in all of human history.”

Lot 289 (\$30,000–50,000) is one of a handful known vintage large format prints of the only photograph of Neil Armstrong on the Moon, as NASA believed at the time that no photograph at all existed of the first man on the Moon. The photo was not published for 20 years until researchers recognized Armstrong near the LM Eagle in this frame of a panoramic sequence by Buzz Aldrin.

Selfies may be ubiquitous, but few can boast a selfie in space. **Lot 159** (\$8,000–12,000), taken by Buzz Aldrin in 1966, is the first selfie in outer space. **Lot 195** (\$1,500–2,500) is the first selfie in lunar orbit. **Lot 306** (\$2,500–4,000) may be considered the first moon-selfie, and shows Pete Conrad fully reflected in the visor of fellow astronaut Alan Bean.



Lot 159 The first selfie in outer space, Buzz Aldrin [Gemini XII], 11–15 November 1966 \$8,000–12,000

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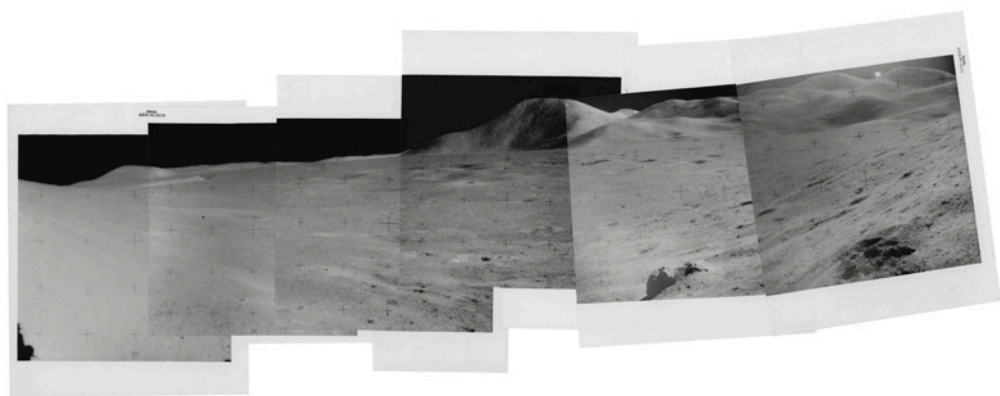
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Of particular visual significance are the extremely rare panoramas that Apollo astronauts were tasked with creating (**Lots 299**, \$5,000–7,000 and **351**, \$3,000–5,000). In the one sixth gravity

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Lot 351 *Panorama of the majestic valley of Hadley Apennine, as seen from the green boulder at station 6A James Irwin [Apollo 15], 26 July - 7 August 1971, EVA 2 \$3,000–5,000*

of the lunar surface, these series were made at great pains to the astronauts; they were wearing helmets, the cameras were mounted on the chests of the spacesuits, and, without the benefit of a viewfinder, crews were trained how to point, shoot, turn slightly, point and shoot again until a panorama of overlapping photographs was generated that could later be hand-assembled into David Hockney-like panoramic collages.



Lot 118 *The first photograph of a human being in outer space: Ed White over Hawaii; during the first US spacewalk, James McDivitt [Gemini IV], 3-7 June 1965 \$5,000–7,000*

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To the Moon and Back

Since Martin-Malburet first began his collection at the age of 15, the horizon of space travel has reemerged in cultural consciousness—not just in the aspirations of tech moguls like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, but also in the rising popularity of pioneering African American science fiction author Octavia Butler, for whom NASA named the Mars landing site of the Perseverance

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rover in 2021. As a new speculative era of space travel emerges, part of Martin-Malburet's achievement as a collector has been to give context to the wealth of photographic material produced by the moonwalkers and their space-going forerunners.

At the time of their creation, only a selection of photographs was released to the media. "The rest remained in Houston, unpublished," explains Martin-Malburet. He has used NASA's own transcripts of space missions to establish the exact moment when every photograph in his collection was taken, identifying among others two milestones in human evolution; the hitherto unrecognized first photographs of a human being in space (**Lot 118**, \$5,000—7,000) and on the surface of another world (**Lot 253**, \$4,000—6,000). "NASA didn't record such information," says Martin-Malburet, "so you could not know if a shot was taken on the way to the Moon, or on the way back, on the first EVA (Extra Vehicular Activity) or the third. Just as surprising is the fact that NASA did not note down the identity of the photographer. "That is something to which I have given a great deal of time and passion: crediting the author." Martin-Malburet's research efforts have helped bring Apollo photographs to the attention of international cultural institutions; many of the images on offer in **One Giant Leap** have been exhibited at the Grand Palais, Paris; Kunsthaus, Zurich, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen. Martin-Malburet is currently at work on a book presenting the full scope of his research.

As NASA looks to launch Artemis I and plans to return astronauts to the lunar surface with Artemis III by 2025, **One Giant Leap** offers a timely and historic invitation to reflect on the evolving legacy of Project Apollo and its resounding impacts on art, science, and human potential. As the last man on the moon, Eugene Cernan, put it, "Apollo was not the equivalent of an American pyramid, some idle monument to technology, but more of a Rosetta Stone, a key to unlocking dreams as yet undreamed."

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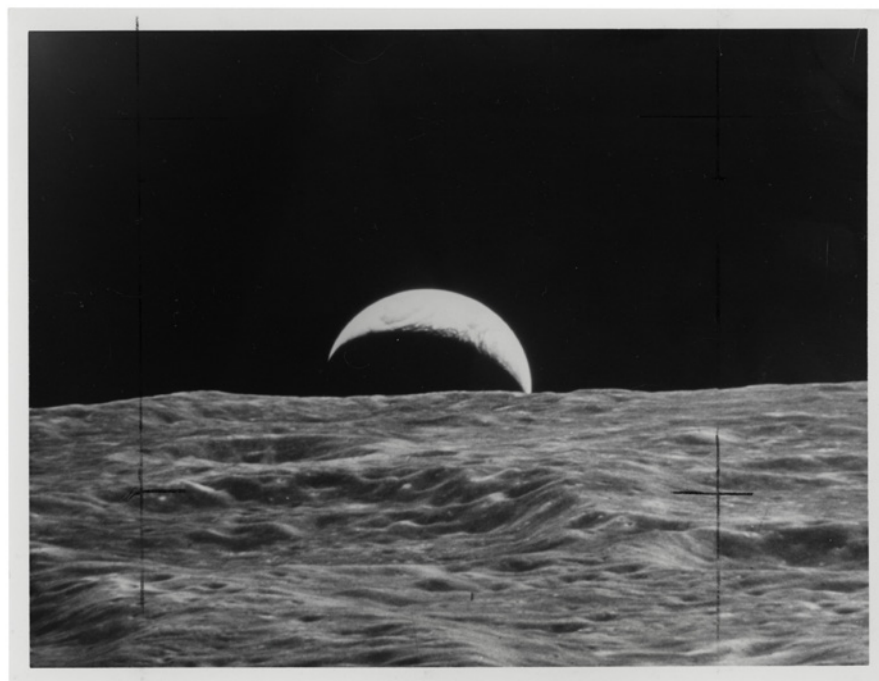
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Lot 425 Last Earthrise Ronald Evans [Apollo 17], 7–19 December 1972 \$4,000–6,000

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