

Sotheby's to Offer The Best Surviving NASA Videotape Recordings Of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing

Representing the Earliest, Sharpest and Most Accurate
Surviving Video Images of Man's First Steps on the Moon

Unrestored, Unenhanced, and Unremastered

Purchased at a Government Surplus Auction
Directly from NASA in 1976 for \$217.77

NOW ESTIMATED TO SELL FOR \$1/2 MILLION

Headlining Sotheby's Auction Dedicated to
SPACE EXPLORATION

To Be Held on 20 July in New York
-The 50th Anniversary of Apollo 11-

Public Exhibition Opens 13 July



NEW YORK, 28 June 2019 – This July, Sotheby's will offer the earliest, sharpest, and most accurate surviving video images of man's first steps on the moon: three original NASA videotape recordings of the Apollo 11 lunar landing. Unrestored, unenhanced, and unremastered, the significance of the videotapes was recognized during NASA's fruitless search at the time of the 40th anniversary of the lunar landing for its original SSTV recordings.



The tapes will headline our auction dedicated to [Space Exploration](#) on 20 July in New York – the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 lunar landing – when they are estimated to sell for \$1/2 million. At a combined run time of 2 hours and 24 minutes, they capture everything from Neil Armstrong's declaration: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind," marking the historic moment the first human set foot on another world, to the "long distance phone call" with the President of the United States, and the planting of the American flag.

The Space Exploration auction will open for public exhibition on 13 July alongside, [Omega Speedmaster: To the Moon and Back](#) – an auction dedicated to the official watch of NASA.

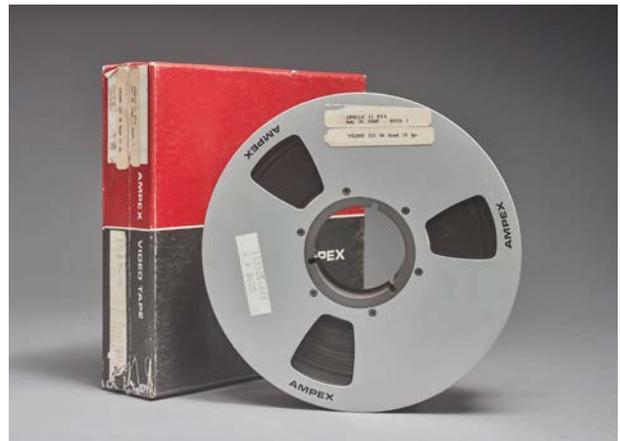
The present videotapes are the only surviving first-generation recordings of the historic moon walk, and are sharper and more distinct than the few tapes that have survived from the contemporary network television broadcasts – all of which endured some loss of video and audio quality with each successive transmission from microwave tower to microwave tower.

Viewed only three times since June 1976 (perhaps the only times since they were first recorded late in the evening on 20 July 1969 at NASA's Mission Control Center, Houston, Texas), the three reels of 2-inch Quadruplex videotape transport viewers to the big screen monitor at Mission Control, which displayed clearer images with better contrast than those that the more than half-billion-person television audience witnessed that momentous July day on their home sets. Home viewers watched video that had been transmitted over a 1,600-mile relay of microwave transmission towers to the major television networks in New York City, with each transfer causing a bit of deterioration to the picture quality. In contrast, Mission Control saw the same video that is on these 2-inch Quadruplex videotapes: moving pictures sent directly to Houston from closed circuit TV transmissions from the

lunar surface beamed to 64-meter-diameter radio telescopes at the Parkes and Honeysuckle Creek Observatories in New South Wales and Canberra, Australia, respectively, and NASA's own similar-sized antenna in Goldstone, California.

Cassandra Hatton, Vice President & Senior Specialist in Sotheby's Books & Manuscripts Department, commented: "The successful lunar landing of Apollo 11 captured the world's attention 50 years ago, uniting us in a collective belief in the unlimited potential of mankind. From neighbors gathered around a television set to the cosmonauts in Star City and the astronauts and engineers in Houston, this was a unique event in history that people from all walks remember with excitement and positivity. And what we universally recall about that event is best documented on these tapes – a glorious moment that united the people of earth in peace, as witnesses to mankind's greatest achievement."

This direct transmission originated from a Westinghouse TV camera that NASA had commissioned specifically to transmit images back to Earth from the lunar surface. Since the camera had to be deployed before Armstrong and Aldrin exited the Lunar Module (LM) if it was truly going to capture their first steps on the surface of the moon, the camera was stowed in a shock-proof and insulated mount on the LM's Modularized Equipment Stowage Assembly (MESA). Armstrong released the MESA when he first peered out of the LM, so that the camera would be in position to capture his slow descent down the ladder and onto the lunar surface. The two astronauts later removed the camera from the LM and mounted it on a tripod to capture a wider view of the LM and their activities and experiments.



The Westinghouse lunar-surface camera shot ten frames per second, using only one-tenth of the bandwidth of the 30-frames-per-second format then standard for television broadcasts (known as NTSC). The transmissions to Earth began when Buzz Aldrin engaged the Westinghouse camera circuit breaker. While the crew was prepared to deploy an erectable S-Band antenna to facilitate transmission, that proved unnecessary: since they landed in alignment with the receivers at Honeysuckle Creek and Goldstone, they were able to transmit the video directly back to Earth using an adjustable high-gain antenna on the Lunar Module.

The high-resolution TV images received at the Parkes Observatory were recorded onto a total of forty-five large diameter reels of narrow-band slow scan (SSTV) videotape. The images were simultaneously transmitted from Australia to NASA Mission Control in Houston, where they were converted to NTSC for network broadcast, and recorded using Ampex VR-660B video recorders onto 2-inch wide reel-to-reel Quadruplex videotape, including the present videotapes on offer.



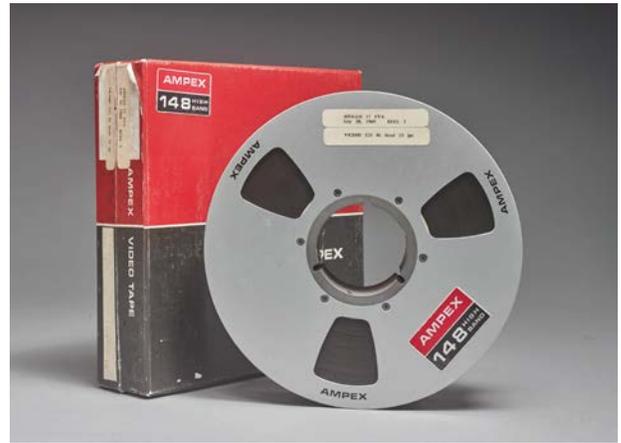
The videotapes will be offered from the collection of Gary George, the man responsible for salvaging and safeguarding them for the past 43 years. As an engineering student at Lamar University, George was awarded a cooperative work internship at the NASA Johnson Space Center in June of 1973. During his internship, he would occasionally attend government surplus auctions, and in June 1976, at an auction at Houston's Ellington Air Force Base, he purchased, for

a bid of \$217.77, a single lot consisting of some 1,150 reels of magnetic tape whose "Owning Agency Or Reporting Office" was NASA. Among the reels were about sixty-five boxes of 2-inch, reel-to-reel videotapes of the type used by television stations. A new reel of Ampex tape cost about \$260 at that time, and since the tapes could be re-recorded, George purchased the lot with the intention of selling the used—but still usable—tapes to local TV stations.

After selling some of the tapes and donating others to Lamar University and a local church, George's father noticed that in addition to the manufacturer's labelling, three of the boxes had smaller typewritten labels identifying them as "APOLLO 11 EVA | July 20, 1969 REEL 1 [-3]" and "VR2000 525 Hi Band 15 ips." Thinking that these particular tapes may be worth hanging on to, George saved the three boxes, giving them little thought until early 2008 when he learned that NASA was attempting to locate its original slow scan videotapes of the Apollo 11 EVA (Extravehicular Activity) in anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the first manned moon landing.

At this point the tapes were now vintage, compelling George to seek the assistance of the DC Video studio, which owned equipment capable of playing the videotapes. In October 2008, George's videotapes were played at DC Video, very possibly for the first time since they had been recorded.

Miraculously, the tapes were in faultless condition, displaying a picture quality superior to any other existing contemporary videotapes. In December 2008, his tapes were played for a second time since he bought them in 1976 and were digitized directly to 10-bit uncompressed files, retaining their original 525 SD4/3 specifications and downloaded onto a one terabyte hard drive (which is included as a part of the sale of these three reels of videotape). This was the last time these reel-to-reel videotapes were played until Sotheby's specialists viewed them in order to confirm their quality for this auction.



As for NASA, the agency abandoned its search after concluding that the forty-five reels of SSTV high-resolution recordings of the Apollo 11 EVA had been erased and recorded over and any duplicate 2-inch Quadruplex videotape recorded by NASA, similar to those purchased by George, had either met the same fate or—perhaps worse—been irretrievably damaged due to poor storage protocol. NASA marked the ruby anniversary of Apollo 11 in 2009, by contracting with Lowry Digital to restore and enhance the footage of the EVA that had been saved by CBS Television – the version known to most viewers today.

From Neil Armstrong's first step to Buzz Aldrin's bounding down the LM ladder shortly after him; from Aldrin's exuberant bouncing around on the surface of the moon to demonstrate the effects of lunar gravity to the remarkable "long distance phone call" with the President of the United States; from the astronauts' solar wind experiment to their deploying the American flag on the surface of the moon; from the collection of soil and rock samples to the photographing of the "magnificent desolation" of the lunar landscape—this is the Apollo 11 moon walk as seen that historic evening of July 20, 1969, by the staff of Mission Control.

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