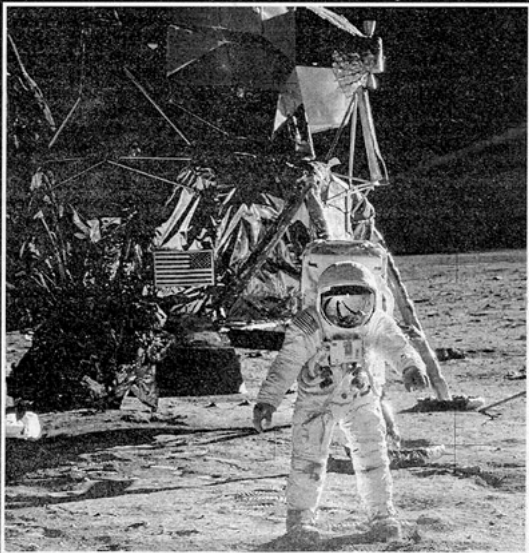
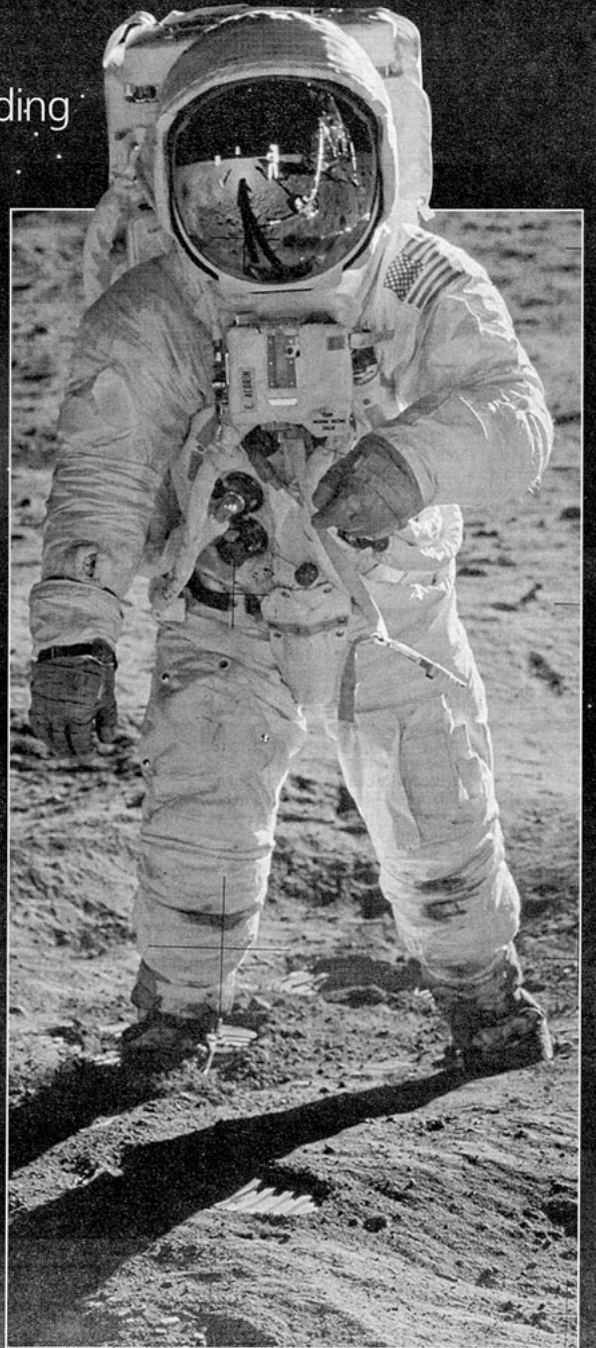


The epic moonbook is out of this world...and so is the price!

Books Editor **John Spain** on a very special publication commemorating the first lunar landing



Lift-off: Buzz Aldrin (above) on Apollo 11; an iconic shot of Aldrin on the moon (right) with Neil Armstrong reflected in the visor; Armstrong on the moon with lunar landing vehicle in the background (below).



It was 40 years ago today, on July 20, 1969, that Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. And today a very special book to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing is launched by Taschen, the international publisher which specialises in magnificent — and very expensive — design and photography coffee table books.

This 348 page large format book, titled *Moonfire*, combines text by Norman Mailer with truly spectacular photographs from the archives of NASA and *LIFE* magazine to create a unique record of the mission that has been called the single most historic event of the 20th century.

But it does so at a price. Only 1969 copies of the book (1969 was the year, geddit?) have been printed. The books numbered one to 1957 are priced at \$1000 in the US, £650 sterling in Britain and €855.25 in Ireland (now on the Easons website, plus an extra €7 for postage, but who's counting?).

The XL (extra large) format book includes four foldouts and comes in a custom box with a plexiglass convex window. It also includes a framed, numbered, archival-quality photographic print, produced using a revolutionary new printing technique, and signed by Buzz Aldrin.

This shot of Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon, with fellow astronaut Neil Armstrong reflected in his helmet's visor, is the definitive image of the Apollo 11 mission, one of the most famous pictures



ever taken. The shot is also used on the cover of the book.

The final 12 books, numbered 1958 to 1969, are even more expensive because each one also includes a certified piece of Moon meteorite — your very own tiny sliver of moon rock — in the book binding.

The prices of this so-called Lunar Rock edition of 12 copies varies depending on the weight of moon rock with each one. Moon rock usually sells at around \$5,000 a gram so the prices are likely to be well in excess of that — potential buyers are asked to contact the publisher via the Taschen website.

The sliver of moon rock you get is not from samples brought back by the Apollo astronauts. It comes from lunar meteorites, tiny chunks of moon rock that were broken away from the moon by meteor impacts and fell to Earth as falling stars over millions of years.

Very few have been found (in total just over 30 kilos) so they are extremely valuable. The moon itself, of course, was formed from the Earth when a huge meteor strike billions of years ago broke away part of the earth's crust which formed itself into the moon over the ages.

Perhaps just as precious as the moon rock is the text of this book, by the late Norman

Mailer. The great American writer was hired by *LIFE* to cover the moon shot and wrote a three-part feature for the magazine which he developed into a book. The text in *Moonfire* comes from that seminal work of cultural analysis

which explores the scientific and philosophical implications of space travel and the psychology of the men involved — from rocket engineer Wernher von Braun to the three astronauts. Mailer's provocative account remains unsurpassed in defining the epochal event.

Illustrating Mailer's gripping text in *Moonfire* are hundreds of the greatest photographs from the NASA vaults, magazine archives, and private collections. Many previously unpublished, these images trace the development of the agency and its mission, up to that breathtaking instant when man first stepped on the moon's surface, and the world's jubilant reaction.

Buzz Aldrin, who was with Neil Armstrong on the moon, also contributes to the book and the captions by him and other Apollo 11 experts explain the history and science behind the images, citing the mission log, post-flight interviews with the astronauts, and publications of the day.

Curiously (because he was only four at the time) the book also has an introduction by Irish writer Colum McCann. Writing about Mailer, McCann says:

"More than anything else he would have loved to be onboard ... inside the goddamn thing, weightless, soaring. Over a drink he might have told you wryly that he was too short, too fat, too Jewish to go that far, but if you stuck your hand through his rib cage and wrung his heart for the truth, he would have insisted on the necessity of a writer being there, at the pulse of the moment, the throb of the wound."

Moonfire by Norman Mailer, is published by Taschen and is available from Easons at €855.25.