



Photography: Ralph Morse/Life

## Mailer's fire burns again

**Norman Mailer, *Moonfire*:**  
*The epic journey of Apollo 11*  
 by Norman Mailer and Colum  
 McCann, Taschen, £650/\$1000

Reviewed by Adam Goff

THE 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing has triggered numerous commemorative publications, a testament to the mission's technological achievement and cultural legacy. But none, I suspect, is as expensive or heavy, or as skilfully designed, researched

and packaged, as *Norman Mailer, Moonfire*, a collectors' edition of the author's writings on Apollo.

The book brings together hundreds of photographs, drawings and ephemera from the NASA archives - some familiar, others previously unpublished. Among them are amazing images from the now defunct US magazine *Life* by photographers such as Ralph Morse, who took the image above of the three Apollo 11 astronauts with their wives and children.

The text is taken from Norman

Mailer's musings on Apollo 11 in *Life* as well as excerpts from his book on the mission, *Of a Fire on the Moon*, first published in 1970 and now out of print.

In 1969, Mailer was one of the most celebrated and controversial authors in the US. He roamed NASA, recording the people and processes that converged to put astronauts on the moon. Remarkably for Mailer, whose self-regard was legendary, the first chapter in *Of a Fire on the Moon* is entitled "A loss of ego". A quote from the author published in

1969 goes some way to explaining: "I began to realise that the moon landing was an event no man could ever dominate with his ego, and I realised I was going to have to work 20 times harder on the book than I thought I would... There are areas of ambiguity about the landing on the moon at least as large as when Columbus came back from the discovery of the new world."

Taschen is printing only 1969 copies of *Moonfire*, 12 of which come complete with fragments of moon meteorite. ■