

Soviet-era space capsule fetches 1 mn euros at auction (Update)

May 7 2014



A man takes a picture of the Soviet space capsule Vozvrashchayemi, on May 5, 2014, in Brussels

A Soviet-era space capsule that was used for a series of key test flights into space in the 1970s fetched a million euros at auction on Wednesday.

The capsule went to an unidentified European buyer after bidding by telephone, Christine de Schaetzen, who heads German auction house

Lempertz, told AFP after what it said was the first such auction in Europe.

The historic piece dating back to the Soviet-US space race during the Cold War had been estimated at between one and two million dollars (700 to 1.4 million euros).

A British company first bought the 2.2-metre-high (seven feet) capsule, designed to carry three cosmonauts but used only for unmanned test missions.

It was extensively restored with all trace removed of the searing burn marks it picked up on re-entry to the earth's atmosphere and re-painted to a pristine white.

Lempertz said it organised the sale to mark the opening of new offices in Brussels, aiming to attract attention with the highly unusual lot, known as Vozvrashchayemi Apparat (VA), or "re-entry capsule" in Russian.

Two more recent space suits also went under the hammer. One worn by anglo-American astronaut Michael Foale to reach the ISS international space station aboard a Soyuz in 2003 sold for 70,000 euros.

The other, used by cosmonaut Alexander Kalery for a flight to the MIR station in 1996, fetched 63,000 euros.

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Citation: Soviet-era space capsule fetches 1 mn euros at auction (Update) (2014, May 7) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-soviet-era-space-capsule-mln-euros.html>

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