

Moon dust heading to auction after galactic court battle

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A bag containing traces of moon dust is heading to auction—surrounded by some fallout from a galactic court battle.

The collection bag, used by astronaut Neil Armstrong during the first manned mission to the moon in 1969, will be featured Thursday at a Sotheby's [auction](#) in New York City of items related to space voyages. The pre-sale estimate is \$2 million to \$4 million.

The artifact from the Apollo 11 mission was misidentified and sold at an online government auction. NASA fought to get it back.

In December, a federal judge ruled that it legally belonged to a Chicago-area woman who bought it in 2015 for \$995.

Sotheby's declined to identify the seller. However, details of the 2015 purchase were made public during the court case.

Investigators unknowingly hit the moon mother lode in 2003 while searching the garage of a man later convicted of stealing and selling museum artifacts, including some that were on loan from NASA.

The 12-by-8½-inch (30-by-20-centimeter) bag was misidentified and sold at an online government auction.

Nancy Carlson, of Inverness, Illinois, got an ordinary-looking bag made of white Beta cloth and polyester with rubberized nylon and a brass

zipper.

Carlson, a collector, knew the bag had been used in a space flight, but she didn't know which one. She sent it to NASA for testing, and the government agency, discovering its importance, fought to keep it.

The artifact "belongs to the American people," NASA said then.

U.S. District Judge J. Thomas Marten in Wichita, Kansas said that while it shouldn't have gone up for auction, he didn't have the authority to reverse the sale. He ordered the government to return it.

The judge said the importance and desirability of the bag stemmed solely from the efforts of NASA employees whose "amazing technical achievements, skill and courage in landing astronauts on the moon and returning them safely have not been replicated in the almost half a century since the Apollo 11 landing."

When it comes to moon landings, Thursday's auction is far from the final frontier.

A group called For All Moonkind, Inc. mentioned the [moon](#) bag this week while campaigning for "measures to preserve and protect the six Apollo lunar landing sites."

It plans to take up the issue next month at the Starship Congress 2017 in California.

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