



Episode 801, Story 3: Moon Museum

Gwen Wright: Our final story takes us high into the stars and deep into the provocative art movements of the 1960s. July 20, 1969: a nation ruptured by assassinations, war, and cultural upheaval pauses to marvel as Neil Armstrong takes one small step onto the moon.

Archival: "That's one small step for a man. One giant leap for mankind."

Gwen: The moon missions are a massive undertaking – the culmination of years of research, money, experiments, and fatal accidents. Every step, screw, boot and button is accounted for. Every second, sequence and section is planned. There can be no surprises. Now, over 40 years later, a man from Tampa, Florida believes he may hold something amazing – the first piece of art to land on the moon.

Jade Dellinger: For years I've wondered if I'm holding the world's first moon museum!

Gwen: I'm Gwendolyn Wright, and I'm starting my investigation with a visit to Jade Dellinger.

Jade: Nice to meet you.

Gwen: Very nice to meet you.

Jade: Please come in.

Gwen: So Jade you have an unusual piece of art to show me?

Jade: I do. It's in this small box. It's I believe to be a ceramic chip that was a collaborative artwork with drawings by six artists that intended to have this sent to the moon with the Apollo 12 mission.

Gwen: Who were the artists?

Jade: My understanding is that Andy Warhol contributed. Robert Rauschenberg contributed and four other artists that are quite well known.



Gwen: So these were major artists. Where did you find it?

Jade: I found this in an online auction. And there wasn't a tremendous amount of information.

Gwen: Who was selling it?

Jade: I believe it came from a relative of an engineer that had worked at Bell Laboratories in the 1960's.

Gwen: The seller told Jade the details about the artists whose work is etched onto the ceramic mini-canvas, and confirmed the idea that it was made for a specific purpose: getting it on the moon. The seller also said more than one chip was made. What's the main thing you'd like for me to find out?

Jade: Well I'd like to know if this chip or one like it made its way to the moon.

Gwen: I have to say, I tend not to believe 'went to the moon.' it's an intriguing concept. I'll take it with me, and take very good care of it. I'm heading back to my hotel to take a closer look. It is tiny. It's exactly three quarters of an inch by half an inch and there are 6 small drawings. There are no signatures and they're clearly very different. There's certainly nothing here that proves these drawings were made by world-renown artists. Robert Rauschenberg was known for creating works with found objects. And in the late 1960s, Warhol was making films and pop art lithographs.

Gwen: I vividly remember watching Apollo 11 on television. We were transfixed. But I don't really remember much about Apollo 12. Was this artwork smuggled onboard, or did NASA green light the project? These were highly rational men of science. And people's lives were at stake. Well, let me see if I can get any background information online. Apollo 12 was the second mission to land a man on the lunar surface. It launched on November 14, 1969...just four months after Neil Armstrong took his famous steps. They were up there from November 14th to 24th, 1969. Ten days. At the end of their ten days, the astronauts returned the lunar module to the command module, leaving the legs of the descent module on the moon, where they remain today. This is



interesting...not long after its creation in 1958, NASA began commissioning artists to celebrate space flight. But no mention of our chip, or of putting art on the moon. Here's a story. It's from the New York Times on November 22, 1969, just eight days after Apollo 12 lifted off. A New York sculptor named Forrest Myers has yearned to plant a work of art on the moon. Now he believes he has done so via the Apollo 12 mission. A tiny ceramic wafer bearing drawings by 6 New York artists." Andy Warhol, Claus Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, David Novros, John Chamberlain, and Forrest Myers himself all contributed works to this so-called "Moon Museum". Myers claims one chip was clandestinely affixed to a leg of the lunar module. But an official of the space agency is not so sure. He said that he knew nothing about the purported project. Ha! Well, I've got to get hold of this Forrest Myers. A renowned artist with sculptures in collections around the world, Forrest 'Frosty' Myers has been creating influential works for over 40 years. Back in 1969 he was at the center of New York's vibrant art scene. So here's the chip that I told you about frosty. Now you did make this, right?

Forrest Myers: Oh yes, this is one of the chips.

Gwen: How many were there made?

Forrest Myers: I think there were 16 of them. There might have been 20. Here's mine.

Gwen: Tell me what inspired you to create this?

Forrest Myers: Well, going to the moon, was the biggest thing in our generation. It's hard to explain that to the kids today. I mean we were stepping off the planet. My idea was to get six great artists together and make us a tiny little museum that would be on the moon.

Gwen: Frosty explains that David Novros and John Chamberlain did drawings that looked like circuitry. Claus Oldenburg contributed his signature Mickey Mouse, and Robert Rauschenberg, a single minimalist line.

Forrest Myers: Andy Warhol decided that he would do his signature, which was an "A" and a "W".



Gwen: But Frosty says that from a certain angle the letters could also look like a rocket, or a piece of anatomy.

Forrest Myers: And he was being oh, the terrible, bad boy.

Gwen: Frosty's own contribution was a linked symbol he called interconnection. How did you get the work reduced to something this small?

Forrest Myers: There were just sort of standard sheets of paper, maybe 8 1/2 by 11.

Gwen: Frosty explains how a group called E.A.T, 'Experiments in Art and Technology', was creating exciting partnerships between artists and engineers. They put him in touch with some scientists at Bell Labs. Using a novel process similar to the one used to create telephone circuits, an engineer named Fred Waldhauer reduced the sketches and imprinted them onto a thin ceramic wafer.

Forrest Myers: They just, they ran with it. It was great. At the time, this was state of the art engineering.

Gwen: Well what happened when you approached the people at NASA?

Forrest Myers: Well at first it seemed promising you know. And finally, we realized that we were just getting the run around, you know. They never said "no". I just couldn't get them to say anything. Well, Fred Waldhauer knew an engineer at Grumman Aircraft that was working on the lunar lander. And this guy immediately said, "Yeah, I can do this". I said, well how will we know when he's going to do this? Cause now the time is approaching. We're getting close.

Gwen: Frosty tells me the secret agent at Grumman had agreed to send a telegram when the deed was done.

Forrest Myers: My doorbell rang and it was Western Union and there was a telegram. And of course I was dying you know it could say yes or no. I didn't know.



Gwen: What did it say?

Forrest Myers: Well I actually have it. It says, "Cape Canaveral, Florida; 3:35 Eastern Standard Time"; and it just simply says, "You're on. A-OK. All systems are go. John F". Then you know then there's cause for celebration. And we went to the bars and opened some champagne you know. It's very exciting. I haven't thought of the moon the same since.

Gwen: But the question remains, who sent the telegram?

Forrest Myers: Fred said, look this guy made a promise that I'm not going to expose who this guy is. And I just took it at that, it was okay.

Gwen: Frosty tells me only Fred – and John F. himself – know his identity. Well can I talk to Fred?

Forrest Myers: Well Fred's passed away. So many of the engineers and a couple of the artists are, you know, this was 40 years ago.

Gwen: I will try my very best to put the pieces together. Thank you so much. Maybe one of the astronauts from the mission can help me? One of only a dozen human beings to walk on the moon, astronaut Alan Bean soared into outer space with the Apollo 12 mission.

Alan Bean: Hi, nice to meet you.

Gwen: Captain Bean, it's so nice to meet you.

Alan Bean: The studio is right this way.

Gwen: In the years since his outer space adventures, Captain Bean has devoted himself to painting. As both an artist and an Apollo 12 astronaut, he may be uniquely qualified to answer our questions.

Alan Bean: When the sun's bright on earth of course you either see blue sky or kind of gray clouds. But on the moon there's nothing like that you're looking out into the blackness of space.



There's been something like 54 billion modern humans. We were 12 that got to go somewhere else besides this earth. I feel like maybe I won the lottery two or three times in a row.

Gwen: Well as I told you, I'm trying to find out if this little chip went with you. Have you ever seen this before?

Alan Bean: This is news to me. I'm not aware of this chip going with us.

Gwen: You were allowed to bring some personal objects aboard, right?

Alan Bean: We had a little thing called a "personal preference kit". It was a little cloth bag. And so I would ask my friends and relatives, "Is there anything you'd like me to take to the moon?" It was very official. We laid it out on a table. It was photographed, it was numbered and everything else. So everything that I took for personal reasons NASA knew about.

Gwen: I show Captain Bean Frosty's telegram from the mysterious Grumman employee. It's just before your launching saying, "you're on. A-OK. All systems are go." Signed: John F. Now as best as you can recall, did you know anyone named John F.?

Alan Bean: Most of the several hundred that worked around the lunar module, both from Grumman and from NASA, I didn't know their names that well. I would say that John F. – if this is a truthful thing – would be risking his whole career. What he's worked for all of his life.

Gwen: Captain Bean, it has been a great honor to meet you. Thank you so much.

Alan Bean: Thank you Gwen. Thanks for coming by.

Gwen: My best chance for finding this mysterious John F. probably lies with the scientists and engineers who built the moon lander. In 1962, Grumman, a leading producer of military aircraft, was awarded a prestigious contract: they were going to build the lunar modules. Richard Kupczyk was the launch pad foreman at Grumman. His team was responsible for the final assembly, testing, and launch of the lunar module. He agrees to meet me at the Cradle of Aviation Museum. If anyone can help me track down John F., it might be Richard.



Richard Kupczyk: Well hello Gwen.

Gwen: Hello, Richard, it's so nice to meet you.

Richard Kupczyk: Nice to meet you, how are you doing?

Gwen: I'm doing very well and I'm excited to be here. This museum houses a real lunar module, almost exactly like the one used for the Apollo 12 mission. I share the telegram, and tell Richard we've heard that someone at Grumman snuck the chip on board Apollo 12. Now did you know any one named John F.?

Richard Kupczyk: It's been 40 years. I brought the yearbook with me that we had of all of the people that worked at the cape during the Apollo missions. And all of the technicians are in here and their names are in the back. So if we go to "F", there are a number of F's.

Gwen: We discover two men with the initials 'J' and 'F'. I wonder is one of these two is our guy?

Richard Kupczyk: No, I don't think so. Because they weren't part of the spacecraft team. And the access, you would really have to have a reason to go there and those names aren't familiar to me.

Gwen: So they didn't have access?

Richard Kupczyk: I don't think so.

Gwen: I wonder, given the tight security, was John F. the engineer's real name?

Richard Kupczyk: When I read the telegraph and I saw the way it was written the first thing that jumped into my mind was the fellow who started it all, JFK. So, John F. Kennedy jumped into my mind as a pseudonym maybe.



Gwen: The tight security, the long hours, and the dedication to NASA's moon missions were unlike anything he had experienced, before, or since.

Richard Kupczyk: Everybody wanted the same thing. To go to the moon.

Gwen: So you were creating new rules. Did you break any rules too?

Richard Kupczyk: Let me show you something Gwen. Come with me. Hey, be careful now, you're on the lunar surface. It's been forty years since we've even talked about this. And I feel comfortable talking to you about it now. This is a blanket, and there are about sixteen layers of this.

Gwen: What Richard shows me next means that – like Frosty Myers – I will never think of the moon in the same way again. Well, Jade in many ways this is perhaps the most fascinating and the most frustrating story I've ever worked on.

Jade: Wow.

Gwen: I tell Jade that Frosty confirmed making the chip, and about the telegram he received from Cape Canaveral. But the only person Frosty knew who could have revealed the identity of John F. was Fred Waldhauer, and Fred's passed on.

Jade: Ahh, okay.

Gwen: Now I have another lead. I spoke with Richard Kupczyk who was there on the launch pad, overseeing things. And he told me something that he's never told anybody.

Richard Kupczyk: There are small personal items that the fellas put in between the blankets of the spacecraft.

Gwen: Richard tells me that the engineers buried photos of their children and wives within the multiple layers of the blankets.



Richard Kupczyk: On Apollo 12 there are some things that are on that spacecraft that are laying on the lunar surface right now. And never, ever was there anything that was done to the spacecraft that would be a safety issue. Was it wrong? Yes. But we were caught up into this thing and we were good and we knew it. And we left our mark.

Gwen: So it's possible that a chip like this is on the moon?

Richard Kupczyk: It's not only possible, but at this point in time, I'd say it's, well, my gut feel is it's there.

Jade: Really? Oh, great. That's amazing.

Gwen: I tell Jade that, in this effort to place art on the moon, it seems to me that – for a shining moment – we had bridged one divide in our culture back then. One astronaut had turned to painting when he returned to earth. Scientists at Bell Labs had conspired to help get the work of radical artists to the moon. And the hard-working team at Grumman, who had built the moon lander, had shown a playful willingness to bend some rules, making the space project more profoundly human than I had ever realized. I still want to find out who this John F. was. So we're going to do something we've never before done on this program. We're going directly to the viewers. So if you were John F. or if you know someone who you think could have been John F. Please let us know. We'll post updates on the History Detectives website. This is real history. It's an ongoing process.