

Rocket Science as Art by Rachel Wolfe

alt. BLACKNASA's Rocket of Peace by Rachel Wolfe

David Roy

Peace Rocket, 2019

A film made in collaboration with Vanessa Haddad and Adam Gundersheimer

TRT: 9:20

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Despite the consecutive decades of self-congratulatory policies in the pursuit of progress and newness, the media content remains eerily repetitious. Echoing generations past, both artists and public are faced with the sense little has changed.

While the framework of media and dissemination continue to evolve through various technological formats, many of the narratives remain the same. The disenchantment of the unrealised ideals are compounded by this year's continual reveal of underlying mechanisms and failures, advertising noise, and cognitive dissonance has viewers reaching for the power cord to unplug from the confusion.

David Roy's *Peace Rocket* video finds use of format and media viewers are accustomed to and turns down the volume and stands out by not shouting to be looked at. The film has the hand-held feel and crunchy sound personal recording technology has made us accustomed to. This familiar quality is punctuated by editing and timing that hits the mark at just enough but not too much. The pacing of the film seems to follow a rhythm akin to Roy's walk.

Vacillating between wide frames for context and close-ups, the videographer and the lead share their reprieve. Their kinship extends to the viewer, as a nascent quality of having relived a moment you could have been there for. And the viewer is there, and not there, as again and again the record of an event becomes available for repetitious inscription.

The message in *Peace Rocket* stands out in the way BLACKNASA sets itself apart from the other movements happening in 2020. While peace is nearly always expected to give way to violence, based on some of the events themselves, and the growing understanding those long-scope narratives are framed to appear to evolve naturally that way, the *Peace Rocket* video stands closer to the undocumented reality that after an event, the joy of having done something stands next to the peace and wonder that

follows. The connection between human choice and responsibility grows clear throughout the deliberate acts carried out and edited to 9:20minutes.

Made under BLACKNASA, a project formed during 2016 to, "Reclaim the power of technology as a tool for good," Roy sought to look at ways to ensure art maintains contact with the everyday, and to propel the idea of "rocket science" as both technical and social. Both reflective of his personal character as well as an underlining reminder of the effectiveness of care, Roy speaks pragmatically and sparingly throughout the film.

The sounds play a leading role along with the visuals underscored by the sense of "being there." As viewers are free to view videos in all kinds of contexts, the audio plays into a generational psyche, the barren desert winds, shoes on dusty gravel, the hum of a car and radio, bleeping electric sounds, announcements over a megaphone- evoke the everyday, the of media coverage of war conflicts, yesterday's and today's soundtracks for technology and public gatherings. This play with a subtle cacophony sounds off toward the grand gesture of a small community of applause. The audio and visual pacing, inscribe the meaning of Roy's endeavour to launch the rocket- having traversed the US from Yale on the East Coast back to his homeland of California, as a deliberate and grand gesture of positivity.

In a brief exchange before the official launch reflecting on only have one igniter, though Roy describes the community as helpful and kind, he insists in preferring to be, "self-sufficient." In this moment, the viewer is reminded of both the weight of making a new launch and the American values that became buried under the hyperreality flooding the media. Subtle markers come up through the film, reminding viewers what a community looks like, what autonomy and responsibility do, and what it means to care enough to take a journey, pick up after yourself and keep going. While the painful awareness of unrealised American ideals, seemingly lost to the cacophony of real economic and racial disparities, the Peace Rocket video offers our screens another reality of humble values, just outside the mainstream. Pioneered by artists, the art of rocket science plays on both the nostalgia and the essentially human capacity to keep hope alive.

Courageously into the desert, and as if rooting for the new kid in town, the blatant honesty of the first failed launch of Horus 2A, inscribed with 60 messages of peace and love is revealed. The insistent relaunch gathers enough tension to hint at another misfire before making a successful break from the terrain toward the heavens. The black-painted and marker-signed rocket draws a white contrail into a blue sky.

In this moment, an intimate look at a rocket launching approximates memories of popular films, television and YouTube snippets of news broadcasts of war footage. Instead of the devastation and ruin typically followed by launches and contrails, the viewer is afforded quietude and the soundtrack of the wind whipping through the California desert. The rocket is followed until its landing place on the earth. The parachute having protected the vessel from direct impact, the Peace Rocket film and exposition at M23 carved spaces for both clarity and reflection.

The video is available on [YouTube](#). Watching the film, listening to the film, then watching and listening the film together produces quite a delight- something that can be understood as a new impression defying the expectations written by the media. The offering of the reminder that despite the repetitious insistence of the end times, that the world will keep going on.

