

## INTERVIEW

### Ashfikia Rahman, Files of the Disappeared, Artist Profile

Abysmal silence; impressions of darkly drenched landscapes and faces sewn over by gold, Ashfikia Rahman's photographs in Files of the Disappeared piece together the stories of erasure. 4,000 people were taken in borderlands in Bangladesh and Southeast Asia by police forces, without reason or justification. Their lives after confinement and torture are vowed to silence.

The presence of physical torture is hinted at but the dark rooms make isolation clear and make the subjects half visible as forms lurking or emerging from isolation. Mouths sewn over by gold thread and hand written notes reach to tell the viewer what the voice can no longer speak. The weight of gold symbolized, prioritizing the law, over the voice of the individuals and pairs portrayed in .

Trauma psychology requires people to tell their story to heal. The law and the landscape depicted in Files of the Disappeared whispers with somber desperation to tell those stories. The photographs transform what could otherwise be cinematic, nostalgic landscapes into sinister spaces. The allure of imagining crossing the swaths of grass, rice paddies, foggy twilights, wind whipped nature, is averted by a chromatic treatment turning the depicted terrains into places without refuge. Anxiety and internal confinement, recreate the internal fight to flee where there is no refuge for the viewer. While the landscapes are the actual borderland places, Rahman depicts these as the spaces where the voices echo and become lost to the land, revealing their permanence in a deeply haunting and psychological narratives of people without recognizable faces, paired with hand written notes.

Rahman does not treat the image as a sacred object, and often draws, colors, uses chemical processes, pigmentation and printing techniques to draw together gaps between illusion and memory, through inevitable processes of decay. Her artistic work spans performance and photography. She began as a dancer and has since lived and studied business and photography in Bangladesh and Germany. Her work has gathered recognition in publications, prizes, and exhibitions bringing a critical lens to business, politics, administration where power and the structures that enable erasure and dehumanization are brought to the viewer.

In several of her projects, the photograph witnesses itself as another site of alienation and alteration. The bold visual gestures mirror fervent action towards judicial and moral confrontation. The pairings, texts, and printing techniques embrace stark memory, absent of hope for change. Rahman's projects becomes situated as document, education, a painfully poetic plea to make the invisible emotional scars visible by using every means but the voice itself. Her work could read as a private look into the journals of humans who sought to find light and life while are trapped in psychological prisons.

–Rachel Wolfe

## PRESS RELEASE

Centro Luigi di Sarro present  
Marcela Gottardo & Flavia Monteiro

A NNICA

Curated by Steven Y. Wong

November 7 - November 30, 2019

Opening Reception November 7, 2019, 17:00

Annica (impermanence) and Nicca (permanence) make each other through a perpetual condition of becoming. The A NNICA exhibition exposes viewers to encounter the space between impermanence and permanence through artefacts openly contemplating the processes of materials and life itself.

Gottardo & Monteiro share Brasil as a country of origin and now work in mediums and worlds apart. Evident in the results of each artists' labor are influences from the Florentine countryside and the Coachella valley desert. Emerging through difference and selection, the omission of a background element is suggested as the way artefacts come into being. In this way, the works are formed without a preconceived concept but are made working with materials for their physical relationship to visceral experience.

Fragments become whole pieces and visions become impressions, formed through clays, pigments, plaster, plexi, glass, resin, cyanotyping, and painting. The animism of the objects form a presence from what is through movements of heat, pressure, absence, shadow and light. The arrangements of the works themselves are chosen as to take care to the invitation of discovery and wonder.

The ephemeral quality of personal memory, dreams, and senses sculpt abstractions of landscapes by utilizing the mediums as a translations of these qualities of form as they are in reality, non-personal and open for interpretation.

*expect not to hold*

*eternal struggle*

*process never ends*

*pieces memory lasting*

*regarding pause as stage queue*

*demands steps past the last leg*

*a constant remains*

*making way for grace*

*and grace gives a way*

-Text and Haikus by Rachel Wolfe

Marcela Gottardo was born in Brazil. She lives and works between Los Angeles, California, and Pistoia, Italy. Marcela's artwork begins with explorations of materials and forms, developed through a variety of processes. The presentation of artworks are as evidence and documentation of discoveries made during these processes with materials. She received a Master of Fine Arts in 2014, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting in 2012, at Otis College of Art and Design.

Flavia Monteiro was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She lives and works in the Coachella Valley desert in California (USA). She explores altered perceptions by continually reworking her artwork until preconceptions and expectations are broken and a transformation is completed. Flavia has exhibited her work in California at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Palm Springs Art Museum, Vincent Price Museum, The Bolsky Gallery, Los Angeles International Airport, and has created public artworks for the cities of Malibu and Glendale. Her artwork has been exhibited in galleries in Rio de Janeiro and at the Ibero-American Art Salon at the Mexican Cultural Institute (Washington, DC). Flavia earned an MFA from Otis College of Art and Design in 2013, and BA degrees in Art Education and Social Communication. She completed postgraduate studies in Art Therapy. Before moving to the US in 2003, she worked as an Art Educator and developed art education programs at Colégio Pedro II, the Brazilian Federal model school in Rio.

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## PRESS RELEASE

56 Henry Solo Exhibition, David Roy: Gravity Monster September 9 - October 16, 2021, Tuesday - Saturday 11:00 - 6:00pm Opening Reception Tuesday, September 9, 2021, 6:00-8:00pm Contact: <https://56henry.nyc/gallery>  
56 Henry St., New York, NY, 1002  
646-858-0800 info@56henry.nyc

56 HENRY invites you to, *Gravity Monster*, a two-venue show, by David Roy. The gallery installation marks Roy's first NYC solo exhibition, on view from September 9th through October 16th, 2021.

The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 - 6:00pm. The opening reception, Tuesday, September 9, 2021, from 6:00 - 8:00pm will include a short sound performance by Roy.

*Gravity Monster* invents a more sculptural approach to Roy's ongoing BLACKNASA project and Peace Rocket concept. (<http://www.davidroy.net/index.php/project/rockets/>)  
To this, an amicable launch in upstate New York will follow the end of the exhibition in mid-October.

In a bold move, *Gravity Monster* offers a strategy for subverting cynical pessimism through facing the realities of our world head on. Composed of materials typical in the aerospace industry, Roy describes making the four forms as sculptures first and rockets second. Addressing themes of art and war while taking advantage of the materials' structural and functional properties affords viewers an aesthetic view of the composite nature of the projectiles as free-standing forms, and one poised upon a launchpad.

Within the safe zone of a white walled gallery, an up-close look at benign missiles invites viewers to experience and converse on human motives. Within the hostile subjects such as the interiority of violent acts, the shell of these sculptures point toward a weighty warning. Where remnants are not scrapped, but rather sculpted back together, the *Gravity Monster* exposes the abnormality of dreadful deeds. The latent relationships with the forms and colours poised in the space are what they are, creating the clarity around the usage of such forms as being based on the design of the mind behind their formation.

In piecing together identifiable forms that can be observed as dimensional, abstract paintings, the remnants of conflict are reformed into objects of both contemplation and play. Exhibiting rocket-sculptures was not merely an act of capitulation but rather an artistic exertion of realising the spirit of life itself. As the project has developed in service to easing cultural and ideological tensions, the realisation of the more artistically expressive forms happened to coincide with a time of US military withdrawal, meteorologically catastrophic events, and a growing sense of unease in a loss of trust in both governments and experts.

The seven noble ideals of human space exploration are taken up by Roy's rocket making in BLACKNASA and Peace Rocket. He intends these ideals into *Gravity Monster* as an invitation to take on an alternative view of the ancient, *The Art of War*. The sculptures are made of and embedded with the ideals of creativity, challenge, courage, ingenuity, perseverance, unity, and discovery as benevolent projectiles of carbon fiber, Kevlar, and fiberglass. Black and army green signify militaristic relationships while the blue and aesthetic application and construction point toward a triumphant nature in abstract painting.

David Roy (b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA) is an LA based artist and recent MFA sculpture graduate of Yale University where he was a recipient of the Yale School of Art Social Justice Initiative Grant (2020). He has a BFA in Photography from Otis College of Art and Design. Roy's work is formed out of his LIFE IS ART, ART IS LIFE perspective and has brought a sense of relatable and courageous modesty through his archival

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and observational, documentary photographs, cross-country motorcycle adventures, audio, and BLACKNASA mission to conduct rocket science, both technical and social.

His work has been presented in numerous exhibitions including *No Deep Kissing*, Yale Green Hall Gallery, New Haven, CT (2020), *Ebsploitation*, Curated by Ebony L. Haynes, Martos Gallery, New York, NY (2019), *Messages of Peace for Horus II-A*, Yale University Art Gallery and *Run What You Brung!!*, Green Hall Gallery, New Haven, CT (2018), *United States to Iran Straight*, collaboration with Forouzan Safari, PØST, Los Angeles, CA (2017), *Color Wheels*, juried exhibition for Los Angeles County MTA, CalTrans Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2015), *Bikers Rule!*, curated by The Bureau of Arts and Culture, DTLA Bikes, Los Angeles CA (2012). Solo shows have included *eminent domain*, Mandujano/Cell, Inglewood, CA (2016), *FMLY Ride Retrospective*, Echo Chamber Creative Headquarters, Los Angeles, CA (2014), *David Roy-Analogue Bike Photography*, curated by Veronica Palma, Bike Oven & Flying Pigeon, Cypress Park, CA (2011), and a *Collector's Show*, curated by Photographic Arts Council L.A., DNJ Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (2013). <http://www.davidroy.net>

## ART REVIEW

Rocket Science as Art 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 unrealized 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 9:20 minutes.

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.

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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.

# *The Future of Photobooks*

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FEBRUARY 9, 2010

**"There will always be a place for printed photographs and therefore printed photo books. That place may seemingly diminish in the growing array of digital options. However, there is nothing that can replace the feeling, not just the actual weight in hand, of a book. Books are history, past, present and future."**

—  
Rachel M. Wolfe

Keep Your Shutters Open: Photo Future

3:48AM | URL: <http://fopix.tumblr.com/post/377560544/there-will-always-be-a-plus-for-printed>  
HEADLINE: [Apple Store presentation](#) ([@LaurieMaltz](#))

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Monday, November 21, 2011

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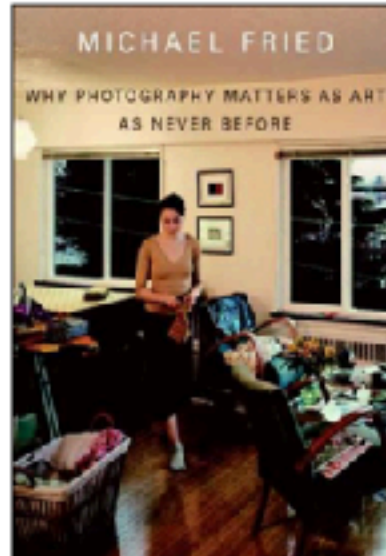
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### **Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before - by: Michael Fried**

A Review by: Rachel Wolfe

Whether the book is held in the hands of someone with ten years, ten days or even ten minutes interest in photography, Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* is an excellent foundation for the understanding, contemplation and critique of contemporary photography.

Fried carefully guides readers through his intensive thought processes while delving right into the influential roles and works of artists such as Jeff Wall, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Demand, Cindy Sherman, Luc Delahaye, Rindke Dijkstra, Patrick Faigenbaum, Beat Streuli, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Douglas Gordon and Philippe Perrenot, James Wellings, Roland Fischer, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. The works of these artists, and more, play informative and integral roles in each of the ten chapters. Analyzing the accurate photographic reproductions, Fried highlights and explores, in exhaustive detail, the works themselves and provides an abundance of support by widely accepted art history references, quotations and conversations with the artists, excerpts from Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, and comparisons on Susan Sontag and several of Fried's earlier writings.



The book is a thoroughly detailed volume of information, offering a variety of audiences a new perspective on the history and development of contemporary photography. Fried's signature approach supports the development of a thorough knowledge base to those new to contemporary photography while feeding the minds of the more experienced with challenging new conclusions. The unarguable presentation of his positions provides the basis needed for a refreshing take on the direction of contemporary photography. Fried discusses the exploration of the everyday, the role of the viewer, analyzes theatricality, Jeff Wall's distinctive "near documentary" style, and the unending analysis of "bad" and "good" photography.

Whether Fried has proved *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* still has yet to be determined, but the book and Fried's conclusions will certainly be a necessary addition to the bookshelves and minds of contemporary criticism and comprehension for years to come.

Rachel M. Wolfe holds a bachelor of art. She is a writer, photographer and designer. More information and many of Rachel's efforts may be viewed at: [www.rachelwolfe.com](http://www.rachelwolfe.com) and [keepyourshuttersopen.blogspot.com](http://keepyourshuttersopen.blogspot.com).

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### **MORE WORK SAMPLES & PORTFOLIOS**

<https://mariamman.net/publications/>

The link goes to a page within my artist website. I use the artist name based on my ancestral relation to Ellen Ammann, on my father's side. Her work for human and women's rights plays a significant factor in my motivation to create a healthier and more compassionate society.

### **Additional writing can be found on Le Lapin**

<https://lelapin.substack.com>