

## How I Discovered To “Support Our Troops”

Dave Beck

It all began with an 11-foot missile hanging from a lonely gallery ceiling, and ended three months later after 3,500 people viewed it on an international scale. Before I dive into the specifics, let me explain why I decided to make a missile out of 500 “Support Our Troops” Ribbon Magnets. 50 years ago, support meant tire drives and career changes. Today support means slapping an impermanent object on the back of a machine that some would argue is a major forerunner in the existence of this “war”. So I decided to make a weapon out of this modern day “support” to see how it fared in reality. I chose the B-61 Nuclear Missile, which measures 11-feet long. It took the riveting of 500 “Support Our Troops” Ribbon Magnets to construct the object. I then hung it in a gallery from the ceiling, horizontally. I thought I was finished. But it was after sitting for countless hours in the gallery when I realized that the people I was speaking to, the art world, were my only viewers in this demonstration.

It was then that I decided I would strap the missile to the top of my Rust-White 1994 Pontiac Sunbird. I covered the missile in packing tape and crudely lashed the object atop the automobile, attempting to pass as close as possible for a “guy that just wanted to drive his homemade 11-ft. ‘Support Our Troops’ Nuclear Missile around town”. I drove it around Madison since early July, getting a spectrum of reactions ranging from people against the war



and glad to see me doing this, to people who believed I was truly the epitome of “Support Our Troops” - the Uber Patriot, if you will. Near the end of August, I decided to close the curtains on the project by doing one final act.

On August 21st, at 10pm, the car/missile item became available on [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) for bidding in the Motors section. The auction began at just .99 cents, and ran for 10 days through August 31st. By the end of the auction, after 35 bids and 3,500 people visiting the site, the car/missile sold for \$801. My aim of this venture was to not just sell my car or my artwork, but also obtain a vague midpoint between the two that might raise the question of what exactly a person is aiming to purchase. Did they bid on this item out of sheer interest, or sheer necessity? That’s what excites me about not only this piece but also public art in general. By employing a worldwide site like eBay, I was able to create a giant digital gallery and campaign, wrought with email forwards from people across the nation telling their friends about this crazy guy who is

selling his car with a giant yellow missile strapped to the top of it. So who was the guy that purchased my car/missile? He was from Chicago and sent me an email the day following the auction close. The email read: “Hello Dave, I’m really sorry, but I was kinda drunk when I bid on your artwork. I thought it was really funny, and I guess I got wrapped up in the hullabaloo. I don’t have any money, and I already have a car. Sorry Again.” That email proved to me that I had accomplished my goal – people noticed something in their daily life that was different and perhaps more interesting, because of me, and I strongly believe that there is no better reason for making art than that.

