How to take photos of Earth while whizzing past at 17,000 MPH

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A timelapse photo taken by Don Pettit on the International Space Station. Credit: Don Pettit/NASA

When you're flying above Earth in a spaceship or space station, taking a clear picture below is more than a point-and-shoot job. As NASA astronaut Don Pettit explains in this video, you need to account for the motion of your little craft to get the best pictures below. And Pettit should know, being a photographer who captured many stunning timelapses in space.

"Apart from everything else an astronaut does on orbit, photography is actually part of our job," Pettit said in the video. "We take pictures of

Earth and the surroundings of Earth, the upper atmosphere. These pictures, in themselves, represent a scientific dataset, recorded now for over 14 years."

The video is called "From Above" and is a production of SmugMug films, who also did an interview with Pettit. As it turns out, much of the photography taken in space is not of Earth—it's engineering photography of window smudges or electrical connections to help diagnose problems happening in space.

"These things need to be documented so the images can be downlinked for engineers on the ground to assess what's happening to the systems on space station," Pettit said in the interview. "We get training specifically on doing these engineering images, which, for the most part, are not really interesting to the public."

Source: Universe Today

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