Perspectives: Jon Cattapan and eX de Medici

*Perspectives* presents the unique insights of two contemporary artists responding to the subject of peacekeeping. As official artists commissioned by the Australian War Memorial, Jon Cattapan travelled to Timor-Leste in July 2008 and eX de Medici went to the Solomon Islands in March 2009. Both artists gained insight into the role of Australian peacekeepers and from these experiences, created a series of works that reveal a personal vision and artistic style.

Cattapan’s works deal with universal themes concerning how people interact and communicate with each other, all the while playing with our everyday notions of space and time. But the artist also makes his works specific to his deployment, interspersing them with depictions of Australian peacekeepers and Timorese people, topographical and night-time landscapes, and the daily activities of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

De Medici’s series highlights the complexity of peacekeeping operations. She is concerned with showing the day-to-day work of the ADF in the Solomon Islands. However, she has also placed the ADF within the broader context of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The artist explores the legacy of colonisation and questions the effects of foreign exploitation of natural resources on national sovereignty.

Continuing a tradition that developed during the First World War, the Memorial has, in the last decade, commissioned many official artists to explore and record the Australian experience of war and peacekeeping around the world.

The exhibition was launched at the Memorial on 2 September 2010. From July 2011 the exhibition will travel for two years to regional and metropolitan galleries throughout Australia.