



WARTIME VISION

The New Art of War

Side by side, the two men move.

A desert soldier balances a gun on his hand. On the split screen beside him, another man on crutches sways back and forth — almost as if in a slow dance — in light and shadows, against a wall painted with graffiti.

The art of our most modern wars is now appearing in exhibitions and galleries the world over. For decades, the Australian War Memorial, a government agency tasked with assisting “Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society” has been sending artists — painters, photographers, printers, sculptors — abroad to document the frontlines. In 2009 it sent its first video artist, Shaun Gladwell, to bases at home and to Afghanistan to capture scenes of conflict from a cinematic viewpoint.

These aren't violent tales of a postapocalyptic antipode. They are instead surprisingly meditative.

A gallery in Perth is showing Gladwell's work through mid-September, and he's shared an exclusive clip with OZY, offering a glimpse of his ruminative wartime vision.

Gladwell, 41, may not have seemed like the obvious choice. He's a skateboarder and BMX rider, and features both in his work. He has crafted slow-mo videos of himself balancing on a bike in urban settings; created pyramid-like sculptures with an eye toward the skateboarders who could use them for tricks; and snapped foggy photos along the shoreline that hint at the raw beauty of the monochromatic.

The Sydney native has a handful of Australian art degrees, a list of national grants and has won, or been short-listed for, serious national prizes including the \$50,000 Shirley Hannan National Portrait Award and the \$20,000 2014 Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award.

“His work articulates a relationship between the performer's body and its immediate environment through slowed motion,” according to the Australian Museum of Contemporary Art. Others have called him Australia's pre-eminent video artist.

Gladwell's responses to OZY's questions were short, but he shared a virtual flood of his work, giving the impression of a man who prefers that his work speak for him.

His wartime work, from a handful of military bases, includes desert references to the dystopian '80s Mad Max films of the Australian outback. But these aren't violent tales of a postapocalyptic antipode. They are instead surprisingly meditative. See for yourself.

