



George Gittoes, *A Plea for Peace Keepers*,  
oil on canvas  
painted in Bundeena, NSW, in 1995  
acquired in 2000

(Accession Number 91481)  
Australian War Memorial

## *A Plea for Peace Keepers*

George Gittoes



oil on canvas  
painted in Bundeena, NSW, in 1995  
acquired in 2000

(Accession Number 91481)

### **Information on the artworks:**

George Gittoes visited Israel in 1993. His escort for much of the visit was Major Rick Modderman, an Australian officer serving with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Modderman's task with UNTSO was to observe and report on military and social developments within UNTSO's area of operations: this meant maintaining contacts with all of the parties to the complex of conflicts enmeshing Israel and its neighbours.

The painting explores the deeply ambivalent nature of the peacekeepers' role: they must immerse themselves in the situation, while at the same time standing apart from it. They must engage with the parties, but not be seduced by them. Their presence creates belief, but must not arouse false hope.

Modderman is shown listening to Palestinian elders in the house of a family that had recently lost several members. The artist's blending of realism and distortion powerfully evokes the difficulties of a peace process that does not imply easy solutions.

### **Questions:**

1. How many "symbols" can you see in this painting? What is happening in the painting?
2. What do symbols tell us about the people in the painting?
3. What do symbols mean and what is their function?
4. How do symbols help us to understand what they represent?
5. Why do you think the artist has portrayed the man on the right as holding the soldier?
6. If you were the soldier and did not like tea or coffee but were still offered a cup, would you drink it? Why?