This new exhibition explores the influence of speed and the dehumanising effect of living in cities.

In a famous pronouncement, Virilio wrote "The virtual city is the city of all cities. It is each important city (Singapore, Rotterdam, Paris, Milan, etc.) becoming the borough of a hyper-city, while ordinary cities become in some sense suburbs. This metropolisation of cities leads us to conceive of a hyper-centre, a real-time city, and thousands of cities left to their own devices. If I am correct, this would lead to a pauperisation, not of continents but of cities, in all regions of the world."

This exhibition to some extent is about the "pauperisation" of cities around the world with the sense of anonymity, alienation and a disconnect between what it means to be human and to inhabit a space which destroys the sense of being human. The idea is not a new one, what is new about the exhibition is the selection of artists which Maloon has assembled through which to explore this concept.

They include the remarkable Russian photographer, Alexei Vassiliev, who has been based in Paris since 1993, and who has built up an international reputation for his soft-focus images. The Quo Vaditis? series, from which one of his smaller 450cm long images has been selected (the big ones are life-size 2 x 9 metres), consists of crowd studies, possibly in the Moscow underground, where the whole mass of humanity is shown. As he writes, they approach as "hurried, compact, indifferent crowds that advance, come together, stop, and then continue on their way without ever exchanging glances." It is an eerie image, which is both immediate and approachable, as well as aloof and enigmatic.

Jon Cattapan has been an artist who has long engaged with the urban surreal. His images of submerged cities, people appearing through night vision goggles, and the constant overlay of tiers of electronic surveillance and of information systems, have all been central to his practice. His paintings, including Imagine a raft (hard rubbish no. 1), 2011, present an image which is accessible, but simultaneously also mysterious and hinting at a different level of existence.

Robert Boyynes, one of Canberra's most accomplished artists, has for several decades been obsessed with people who are transformed through their urban environments and the affects of speed on these people. Displacement caused through by the fragmentation is a theme that runs through the selection of his paintings in this exhibition.

Merilyn Fairsky's single channel, almost half-hour-long video, Stati d'Animo, 2006-2011, is an effective and memorable piece which brings to mind Umberto Boccioni's icon triptych States of Mind: Farewells, those who go, and those who stay behind. Except now, the scene is not set in a railway station, as was the case with the ItalianFuturist, but at the Dubai International Airport. We are dealing with some sort of catastrophe, where passengers are stranded, some are evacuated, while others move around aimlessly in an orderly mass.

Other artists in this exhibition include Gilbert Bel-Bachir, Derek O'Connor and Semiconductor.

I suspect that this is one of those defining exhibitions which will be discussed for a long time after it has been dismantled.

Velocity, ANU Drill Hall Gallery, closes December 14, Wednesday to Sunday, noon-5pm