The GCCR Postgraduate Symposium is organised by postgraduates for postgraduates. The Symposium is supported financially by the Griffith Centre for Cultural Research, and is also made possible through the guidance and assistance of staff from the School of Humanities. We hope that this event will provide a format for an open dialogue of new and developing ideas between students themselves and also between staff and students.
William (Bill) Platz

Bill Platz is a PhD candidate, sessional lecturer and tutor at the Queensland College of Art at South Bank. Bill's research and studio practice engages the portrait genre through photography, painting and video works. His work was recently exhibited in the Bridges to the Unknown show in Chicago at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art for which Bill also contributed the catalogue essay 'The Surface of Neo-Symbolism' as well as an essay about his work titled 'Contemporary Portrait Historié: Cooperative, Performative, Manipulative'.

The mutated model: Artist and Sitter in contemporary portraiture

Initially, my study of portraiture concerned the notion that each Sitter ‘performs’ a coded (iconographic) role when confronted with the lens, brush or pen. My investigation sought to contextualize these works in an art historical analysis of the historiated portrait (portrait historié) and decode the performances through studio sessions and exaggeration in the work. Research into iconography and iconology, beginning with Peirce, Gombrich and Mitchell, began to reveal some essential misunderstandings that were evident in my practice. Rather than the conventionally dyadic interface between Artist and Sitter, there manifested a third agent, the result of both a performative mutation and a depictive mutation: the ‘Model’. Theoretical study, specifically as it pertains to Gombrichian substitution and Mitchell’s pictorial vitalism, focuses the research on these metamorphic transactions between Artist, Sitter and Model. Strategies of mimicry and dissimulation are employed, as is self-portraiture. The works are both covertly and overtly constructed portraits, consisting of photographs, digital video, painting, drawing, and intricate synthetic forms that combine media in fibreglass matrices. The fibreglass constructions are particularly pertinent to the investigation as they hybridize conventional and experimental forms, and traditional and contemporary technologies as literal and metaphoric embodiments of the portrait scheme.