Imaging Identity: Media, Memory and Visions of Humanity in the Digital Present, was held at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra from 15 – 17 July 2010.
by: Dr Melinda Hinkson, ANU

This multidisciplinary conference, hosted by the National Portrait Gallery in collaboration with the Humanities Research Centre, RSHA, drew a high calibre and diverse range of responses to the call for papers. Over the course of three days 40 presentations were made, plus three keynote addresses — by WJT Mitchell, Gaylord Donnelly Distinguished Professor of Art History and Literature, Chicago University, Didier Maleuvre, Professor of Comparative Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara, and David Elliott, independent curator and Creative Director of the 2010 Biennale of Sydney.

Presentations explored the points of conjunction between the most recent digital imaging techniques, forms of creative expression and contemporary processes of identity making. The central theme interrogated the interwoven processes of art production and social control in a digital era. A number of particularly compelling presentations were made by artist-scholar collaborative teams. A related stream explored diverse forms of image making (from photojournalism to self-portraiture), with a concern to grapple with what images reveal about the contemporary character of human encounter. Further streams considered the creative redefinition of portraiture in the digital age, and Australian indigenous portraiture.

A selection of presentations was filmed and these are now posted on the National Portrait Gallery website.