I am presenting to the Billboard program an on going research project known as “SkypeLab Intercontinental Faces and Spaces,”2014 / 2016.

SkypeLab explores the impact of visual communication, through digital screen interfaces, on contemporary identity. This is achieved through blind contour drawing sessions between participating artists from Melbourne Australia, Reutlingen Germany and Shanghai China, within the every day public space of Skype. Artists from all three locations are paired to explore the digital interface of Skype in the context of this project. Outcomes will be exhibited at Federation Square in September 2015 whilst being linked to an exhibition at the Goethe Institute in Shanghai April 2015. In February 2016 the project will be exhibited at the Staedtische Gallerei, a high profile regional gallery, in Baden Württemberg Germany.

The project offers emerging artists, from diverse cultural backgrounds an opportunity to; develop their skills as artists and researchers, build their networks on national and international scale and in real time be exposed to the perspectives of others. The longevity of this project and its potential to further develop its proposed outcomes defines it as a unique visual arts project. Each stage provides new material and new knowledge gained through the artists experiences and investigations, affirming our global connectivity. These works will form the imagery exhibited on the billboards embedding SkypeLab firmly in the intercultural environment found within the City of Yarra.

The Skype project was first presented to the public as part of the 2012 Gertrude Street Projection Festival, four public presentations followed. The first of these was held at the City Library, Melbourne, 2013, where more than 200 digitally printed blind contour drawings all A4 format were installed. The abstract nature of blind contour drawing, as a process, and initial responses of the artists meeting and drawing each other for the first time was introduced. The second exhibition, at Project Space Spare Room, RMIT, presented full colour photographic images of drawings, video installations and sculptural work developed from the original blind contour drawings. Here all 12 artists drew each other on the front windows of the gallery, as a performative demonstration of the Blind Contour drawing method, these remained for the duration of the show. The third and final exhibition in Melbourne, a video presentation at the Big Screen Federation Square, gave an overview of the processes and development of drawings to finished work; this ran over a period of one month. A fourth exhibition was held in Germany at the Reutlingen Civic Centre, Town Hall.

To date the project, has inspired hundreds of artworks and many hours of video footage, examining of the impact of visual communication on contemporary societies. Many of these works, not yet exhibited in public, from Melbourne and Reutlingen will be used to create imagery for the first pair of Bill Boards due to be installed in mid January.

Under the title “SkypeLab Intercontinental Faces and Spaces”, Associate Professor Yonglei Ma from Shanghai has joined Dr McCormick and Prof Eischinger assisting with coordination of artists and exhibition spaces in Shanghai.

Twelve new artists have joined the project, begun to communicate with and draw each other, their work will be used for the second installation of the billboard project in August. All artists invited to participate, whilst, from different backgrounds, have the capacity and commitment to develop as significant artists into the future. All current artists of the Skype project will be in Melbourne in September 2015 for the presentation of the project at Federation Square.

The billboards are an exciting prospect for the Skype project offering a new platform and environment to present developing perspectives of contemporary communication and identity. The digital format of small screens, desk top, lap top, tablet or phone, that we all use daily, will transition easily to the scale of the billboards.

Within the group we have the will, and expertise to present the Skype project and engage the community of the City of Yarra, with new perceptions of how we identify and communicate in the digital age.

I look forward to speaking with you further in regards of this project in the near future.

Kind regards,

Christopher Bold.