

# Introduction

It is an absolute pleasure for the Glasshouse Regional Gallery to present *From Somewhere* by Sydney based artist Todd Fuller. Through his drawings, Todd brings life to paper, transforming observations into a living and breathing animation. In this case Todd has retold the local story of Harry Thompson – the unofficial Mayor of Shelly Beach.

Connecting to the Port Macquarie area was as easy as stepping down memory lane for Todd, as it was a former childhood holiday destination. Like many coastal tourist destinations, they are places to come, relax, reflect and to create memories.

It is poetic that Todd is not only retelling the story of an iconic local figure but that he too shared memories with this area and of Harry Thompson.

Through memories, conversations and observations, Fuller with his lyrical visual storytelling has brought new life to the former local character, Harry Thompson. A colourful character who made Shelly Beach his home for many years after winning the lotto.

It always struck me that maybe winning the lotto wasn't Harry's pot of gold – that it was actually about finding this special place, Shelly Beach.

*To See the Ocean for the First Time*, encapsulates what it feels like to experience all of the beauty of this magical part of the world and how making memories is what life is all about.

I would like to sincerely thank Todd Fuller for sharing this beautifully crafted interpretation of Harry's story. It has been a pleasure to have Todd participate in our Artist in Residence & exhibition programming. I would like to thank the staff at MAY SPACE Gallery for their generous support, which has made this exhibition possible.

**Bridget Purtil**  
Gallery Curator  
Glasshouse Regional Gallery

This exhibition continues the Glasshouse Gallery's commitment to supporting contemporary Australian Artists. Our Artist in Residence program creates opportunities for invited artists to develop new work and present quality artistic experiences to our community.



Image top: *To see the ocean for the first time* (animation still), 2018, digital video; chalk, charcoal and acrylic animation, 4:27mins.  
Image below: *Untitled 25*, 2018, *To see the ocean for the first time* animation, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.  
Images courtesy of the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney.

# From Somewhere

An artist residency is like a 'choose your own adventure' novel – it's a time to break free from your regular practice - focus on a specific project - begin an adventure - be a detective – experiment - provide time to create – escape the confines of your studio or even make friends with a magpie. From my various conversations with artists over the years, an artist residency can be a pivotal point in their career often leading to other amazing opportunities that raise the profile of their practice.

For Sydney based artist Todd Fuller a residency is an opportunity for discovery, to explore, wonder and create visual poetry. His practice is centred on creating a sense of place through storytelling. Fuller integrates sculpture, animation, drawing, performance and painting to construct narratives drawn from empirical experiences, personal or otherwise. His beguiling animations are the combination of thousands of drawn images that capture narrative and the human experience in the most moving and thoughtful way.

There is something very human about the drawn line; a direct connection with the artist and the marks created. The animation process enhances the very nature of the drawn line, gifting it movement to create magic and mystery. Through animation a drawing becomes akin to a theatre performance which suspends our belief and takes us on a journey far removed from the reality of the present day. Like the South African artist William Kentridge, Fuller creates alternative environments through the fusion of drawing and music collaborations that allows the viewer to connect with the protagonists and be submerged within their world. Fuller's works explore narratives that provide a deep understanding of place often exploring the history of a site or commenting on current urban transformations.

In his Glasshouse residency Fuller spent time researching Port Macquarie icon Harry Thompson who was known to locals as the Mayor of Shelly Beach. Harry Thompson's remarkable story began in 1961 after he and his wife Jean won the lottery. They began a journey from Warren in western NSW and ended up at Shelly Beach, Port Macquarie, where the couple adopted the role of caretakers of the beautiful Shelly Beach shoreline for the next four decades. Harry's dedication to the local community was acknowledged when he was named as one of the Port Macquarie Citizens of

Images top left to right  
*Untitled 15*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.  
*Untitled 13*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.  
*To see the ocean for the first time* (animation still) 1 - 3, 2018, digital video; chalk, charcoal and acrylic animation, 4:27mins.  
*Untitled 6*, 2018, *To see the ocean for the first time* animation, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.  
*Untitled 10*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.  
Images courtesy of the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney.



the Year in 1983. Harry continued to care for Shelly Beach up until his passing in 2000.\* Harry's passion for the area was immortalised in the naming of the headland overlooking Shelly Beach and the public art created by Stephen Killick, Stephen King, Sue Bell and members of the local community.

Through research and recollections from local residents and holidaymakers, Fuller was able to build a narrative that created a portrait of the life of Harry Thompson, as well as the beach he called home. The poetic work *To see the ocean for the first time* acts as marker to commemorate and celebrate his life. Fuller has painstakingly captured Harry's story through a series of cyan toned drawings that explore the sublime essence of the Port Macquarie landscape. Fuller has collaborated with Sydney based composer Paul Smith to create a moving composition to complement his animation. Bringing together the violin and a series of abstracted local beach sounds recorded as part of the residency in Port Macquarie, the soundtrack captures a sense of nostalgia and memory, further embellishing the sense of trace that is innate to Fuller's animation style. There is a subtle hint of loss as Harry stares to the ocean which was the muse of his later years. His reflective gaze is full of longing and affection for this beloved place and the people he met and shared a moment with at the beach.

The Glasshouse residency provided Fuller with an opportunity to spend time in the Port Macquarie landscape to experience and explore the coastline and its surrounds. His days started and finished with coastal walks, searching for source material and plein-air sketching on the beach. He explored iconic coastal landmarks and uncovered retro gems of motor holiday adventures. From these explorations Fuller was able to capture the quintessential Port Macquarie experience, an essential element in creating a portrait of a local like Harry. His drawings have the authenticity of first-hand experience and a connection to place that made creating *To see the ocean for the first time* possible. So if the adventure Fuller selected as part of this residency was to be a detective and create a work that connects us to place in the most moving way... one wonders what is Todd Fuller's next adventure?

**Niomi Sands**  
Gallery Director  
Grafton Regional Gallery

\*Port Macquarie News – Janine Watson Once the 'mayor' of Shelly Beach. 4 August 2017



Photo: Chris Rockstroh, Percival Property

## LIST OF WORKS

*To see the ocean for the first time*, (animation still), 2018, digital video; chalk, charcoal and acrylic animation, 4:27.

*Untitled 1 - 3*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.

*Untitled 4*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, two parts 26 x 150cm.

*Untitled 5 - 28*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56 x 75cm.

*Untitled 29*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 150 x 75cm.

*Untitled 30 - 32*, 2018, chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 26 x 75cm.

Images courtesy of the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney.

Composition by Paul Smith. Courtesy of the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney. Created during a Glasshouse Regional Gallery Artist in Residence program.

## Biography

TODD FULLER (b. 1988. Branxton, NSW, Australia)

Todd Fuller graduated from Sydney's National Art School in 2010, since then he has established himself as an exciting artist, curator and educator and has presented numerous solo exhibitions. Fuller's practice integrates sculpture, animation, drawing, performance and painting to construct layered, multi-disciplinary narratives. He explores themes of the human condition, the body in motion and perceptions of queer identities. Fuller has exhibited across Australia and abroad including the United States, Italy, South Korea, Bangladesh, England and Singapore and has undertaken international residencies to the Cité International Des Arts in Paris and the British School at Rome, Italy. He has also undertaken domestic residencies in Bundanon, Grafton, Hill End and Blacktown. Fuller was awarded an honourable mention at the 15th Asian Art Biennale, in 2016, Fuller presented a site specific installation with Tasmanian artist Karin Chan as a part of *Dark MoFo* and most recently, he was the winner of the 2018 Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award.

Todd is represented by MAY SPACE, Sydney.

### GLASSHOUSE REGIONAL GALLERY

Gallery Curator: Bridget Purtil  
 Gallery Assistant: Michelle Campano  
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 Cover Image: **Todd Fuller**, *Untitled 19*, 2018, 'To see the ocean for the first time' animation chalk, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 56x 75cm. Courtesy of the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney

Todd Fuller: *From Somewhere*  
 On view 16 February – 22 April 2019

Printed on recycled paper

## Artist Statement

It was a great privilege to work as an artist in resident at the Glasshouse Regional Gallery Port Macquarie. The time spent there enabled me to spend time researching a local story.

*To see the ocean for the first time* animation draws on research material and local landmarks to re-tell and rediscover a former resident. Source materials for this film came from the local Port Macquarie Hastings Library, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council archives and online resources. Throughout my time in Port Macquarie, I had many opportunities to speak with local residents and holiday makers who remembered Harry Thompson. As with any story, there were both positive and negative recollections of this story. This animation is a marker of his existence, designed to be a springboard for memories and an opportunity to learn the namesake of Harry's Lookout.

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The Glasshouse Regional Gallery would like to especially thank exhibiting artist Todd Fuller and Niomi Sands, Grafton Curator. Special thanks to the Volunteers and Glasshouse Technical, Marketing, Front of House Teams for all their hard work and contribution for this exhibition.

The Glasshouse is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW. Glasshouse Regional Gallery supporting contemporary artists.

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### GALLERY OPENING HOURS

Tue - Fri: 10am - 5pm  
 Sat - Sun: 10am - 4pm  
 Public Holidays: 10am - 4pm

# From Somewhere

Todd Fuller



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On view 16 February – 22 April 2019

