



Australasian  
Association  
of Writing  
Programs

# TEXT SPECIAL ISSUES

Number 65 October 2021

ISSN: 1327-9556 | <https://textjournal.scholasticahq.com/>

## *Sea city*

**Sally Breen and Aaron Chapman**

To cite this article: Breen, S. & Chapman, A. (2021). Sea city. In Nigel Krauth, Sally Breen, Tim Baker and Jake Sandtner (Eds.) *Creative writing and surfing*. TEXT Special Issue 65. <https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.28064>

## Griffith University

### Sally Breen and Aaron Chapman

#### Sea city

Dr Sally Breen is the author of *The Casuals* (2011), winner of the Varuna Harper Collins Manuscript Prize, and *Atomic City* (2013), shortlisted for the People's Choice Book of the Year Queensland Literary Awards 2014. Her short form creative and non-fiction work has been published internationally including features in *Overland*, *Griffith Review*, *Meanjin*, *The Guardian London*, *The Age*, *Review of Australian Fiction*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *Best Australian Stories*, *Hemingway Shorts*, *TEXT* and *The Asia Literary Review*. Sally is a regular contributor to *The Conversation* where she writes on a variety of topics from pop culture to sport, film, visual arts and rock n roll. Sally is senior lecturer in creative writing at Griffith University Australia and executive director of Asia Pacific Writers and Translators. Her latest work 'Don't You Know You've Got Legs – A Gold Coast Surf Culture Manifesto' features in *Lines to the Horizon*, out now with Fremantle Press. Sally has worked as associate editor of the *Griffith Review*, fiction editor of *Wet Ink* and edited numerous collections and special editions of journals including *TEXT*, *MC Journal* and eleven editions of *Talent Implied – New Writing from Griffith*. She recently co-edited a collection of new writing from the Asia Pacific *Meridian – the APWT Drunken Boat Anthology of New Writing* available worldwide from the APWT website [www.apwriters.org](http://www.apwriters.org) and SPD Books in the US. More of Sally's work can be accessed via her website <https://www.sallybreen.com.au>

Aaron Chapman is an artist and writer based on the Gold Coast, Australia working across a range of mediums including photography, sculpture and public art. Chapman's work is motivated by themes of home and memory, and in particular, childhood. Chapman's rich colour photography blends fine art and documentary languages and has appeared at Head On Photo Festival, Centre for Contemporary Photography and Bleach\* Festival. In 2019, Chapman was a Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize semi-finalist and a finalist in the Australian Life Photography Competition at Art & About Sydney. In 2020, he was a finalist in Perth Centre for Photography's CLIP Award and received the judge's commendation award. As well as presenting both small and large sculptures at SWELL Sculpture Festival, Chapman spent the majority of 2020 in research and development for a large public art outcome to be evidenced in 2021. Chapman was also the recipient of a major commission to create new work for exhibition at the new \$60M HOTA Gallery (which opened in May 2021). Chapman attended Griffith University where he received the School of Humanities Writing Prize in 2015. His poetry and prose have appeared in international publications and Australian literary journals. All images © Aaron Chapman

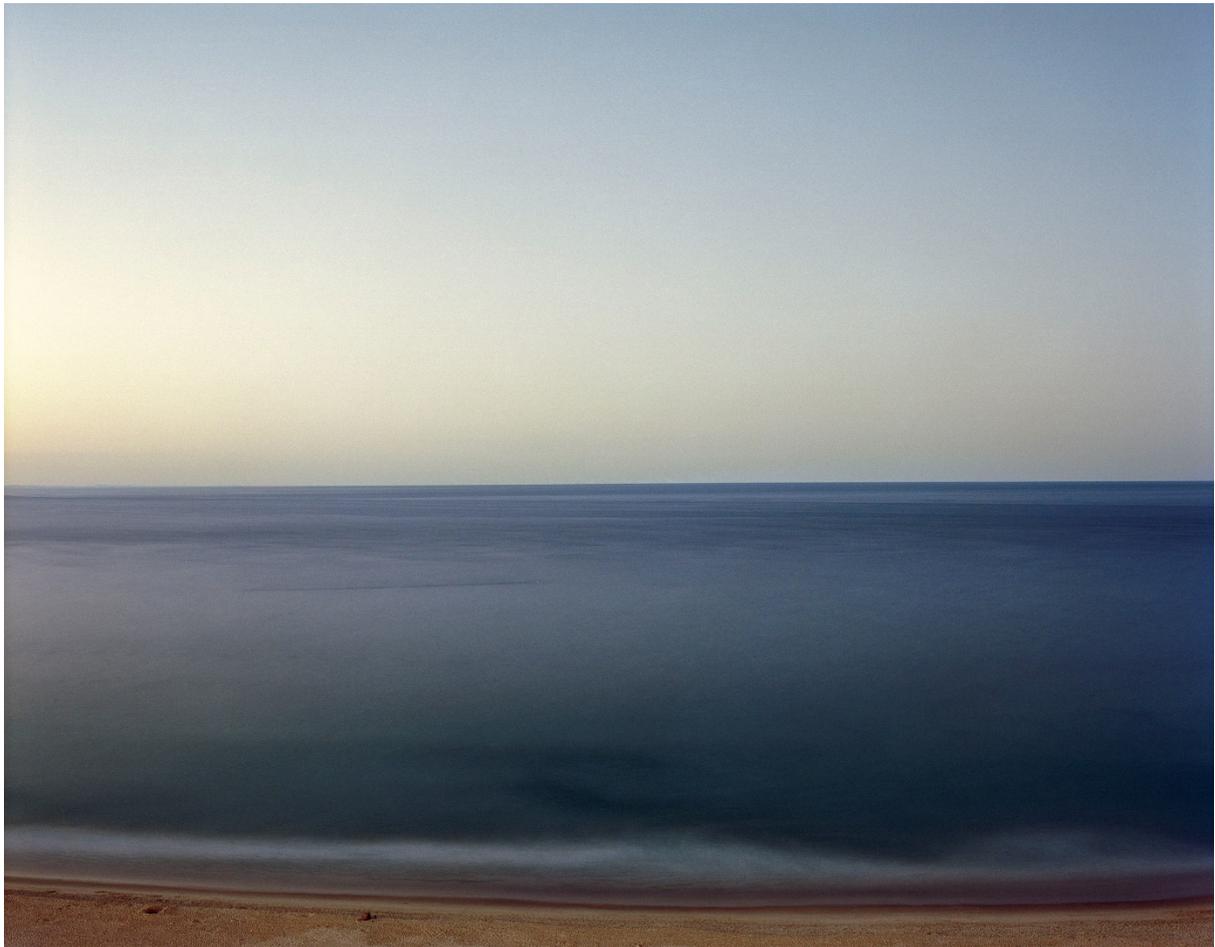


This is what it feels like, to be in this city full of hot salty breath, full of long languid lines, frayed on the edges with palm trees and a gold embossed night. This is what it feels like, to be in this city, inhaling a pure white line, so crisp, so perfect it doesn't sting. Like plummeting into an oblivion that feels right. The city glowing like a sonic neon sign. This is what it feels like to lose control, to be undone, to be unmade – in a city with no rules and no centre.

This is what it feels like to say no to the things I don't want and to say yes to whatever my urges tell me. Not thinking twice. Not looking over my shoulder. Not considering my value or the next guy's or thinking foolishly that anyone here is innocent. I feel nothing but the sun, the sea, and this rapturous joy.

This is what it feels like, in a city that doesn't make me feel grand or noble or safe. In a city that feels like an iridescent gorgeous pain, a crushing mix of glow mesh, salt and self-mutilation. Like a scratch I just can't help but itch, like what I'd do if I only had moments to live. Like being tickled until I cry, like being cut till I bleed and without shame.

How many times have you wanted to be free?



This is what it feels like, when the sun is as bright as it gets here, the glass in front of me full of blue and through the broad clear planes it comes, the sea, like a hand through a waterfall and I stand there fragile and pale and imagine throwing myself in the water, not from the shore but from up here, flying out over the waves and plummeting, dropping in like a sea bird and vanishing without a trace.

The blue sky turning black. The waves a drive-in world, a giant blue screen everything disappears in. Dancing on the surface of the world. Falling off a wave, gliding along inside it. Push and pull. And return. Going out, coming in. Until I'm washed up, and the day fades and the city takes me back, turns into a wonderland of light, whole glass towers and floors and avenues of light. Swirling neon signs, fairy lights in trees, the softer glow of landscaped beams, fountains sparkling and water features spilling – and inside all those glowing apartments – dark shadows, men, women moving through rooms like dim apparitions, throwing each other against gilded mirrors, fake marble vanities, dirty walls. Streetlights and headlights and golden buildings, luminous gardens, rooftops, the heavy trunks of palm trees,

sharp frond shadows climbing walls and falling onto streets, and the edge of the ocean reflecting back the light, always there, always waiting.

This ... is what it feels like.

