



For someone who could barely communicate for the first 30 years of his life, Peter Rowe – artist, illustrator, writer, performer – has certainly made up for lost time.

Peter William Rowe was born in December 1964 with Down syndrome. Speech was, and still is, difficult for Peter due to muscle tone and movement difficulties associated with his disability. For 30 years he could communicate only on a very restricted level and his family and those who knew him believed he had very little understanding and comprehension.

But Peter's life changed dramatically in 1994 when he was introduced to Facilitated Communication (FC) – a strategy that allows him to communicate by pointing to letters on a keyboard. Learning to communicate through Facilitated Communication has opened up a whole new world of personal and creative expression for Peter.

Previously unable to express his everyday thoughts and feelings, FC has unleashed Peter's innate creativity and he has become a prolific and insightful writer. His writings cover many genres including poetry, short stories, fantasy, children's stories and narratives on his own life. Peter has self-published seven children's books including a four-book *Josh the Robot* series, which saw him team up with a graphic designer to produce all of the stunning illustrations. He started a Creative Writing degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2009 and is currently working on his autobiography with the assistance of a ghostwriter.

Peter is also a longstanding member of a unique creative writing group called "The Brotherhood of the Wordless". All its members are without speech and use Facilitated Communication to write their extraordinary poems and prose on life and disability. They have produced a popular anthology *Tapping on the Heart of the World*, with a second in the pipeline and have performed their creative works at writing festivals and public venues alongside performance poet David 'Ghostboy' Stavenger.

One of Peter's favourite artistic pursuits involves his love of music. In 2003 Peter teamed up with internationally renowned musician, composer and instrument maker, Linsey Pollock and local singer Terri Delaney to form a musical trio called "QWERTY". This innovative group used improvisation in its purest form and performed extensively at local and interstate festivals and events.

Art was introduced into Peter's life as a form of therapy to help him overcome extreme physical, sexual and emotional trauma suffered at a residential facility. But Peter's art has developed beyond therapy and he has become a talented artist in his own right. He has had several exhibitions of his art, which sells steadily and has gone all over the world. A series of three paintings won an award and was purchased by Art From The Margins for their collection and touring exhibition.

Peter has also been helping others to understand what it is like to have complex communication needs through presentations at conferences and training support staff from a variety of organisations. He also teaches Disability Services staff and uni students.

Through his art, writing, music and community education, Peter is actively becoming a popular role model for people with a disability. The process of becoming a writer and artist has opened many doors and helped him grow professionally, but ultimately he wants to inspire others with a disability to express themselves creatively and to show the wider 'non-disabled' community that people with a disability can contribute in so many valuable ways to the greater good of all humanity.

Peter now lives at home with his parents who are a great support to him in all of his creative endeavours.

The following are some of the events and activities Peter has been involved in...

COMING UP IN 2011	December – Brotherhood of the Wordless Cabaret at Sandgate August – Presentation at <i>Living With Equipment in 2011</i> symposium in Brisbane, organised by Queensland Health
May 2011	<i>Josh the Robot</i> book event at Go Gourmet, Little Mountain
April 2011	Participated with other members of Brotherhood of the Wordless in the <i>'Big Thoughts From the Frightened Well'</i> performance at Queensland State Library, Brisbane, along with David 'Ghostboy' Stavenger and other musicians and performers.
April 2011	<i>Josh the Robot</i> series launched on Sunshine Coast with book readings at Sunshine Coast libraries. Peter attended the reading at Caloundra library with a group of Grade 2 students followed by a lively and inquisitive question-and-answer session. <i>The books are being sold through the Sunshine Coast Libraries' website and selected book stores.</i>
April 2011	Peter was one of four artists invited to the Official Launch of Art from the Margins (AFTM), in Brisbane. AFTM, through Wesley Mission Brisbane, supports and promotes 'disadvantaged' artists.
March 2011	<i>Josh the Robot</i> children's book series launched at Avid Reader Bookshop, West End Brisbane, along with an exhibition of selected artworks by Peter, in conjunction with Art From the Margins and Wesley Mission Brisbane. This generated print and website stories in various Brisbane and Sunshine Coast media outlets.
November 2010	Guest 'speaker' at conference for speech pathologists held in Brisbane by Disability Services Queensland.
September 2010	Peter's entry of three paintings entitled 'Doorway Series 1-2-3' won the Fulton Trotter Major Award at the Art From The Margins (AFTM) Exhibition, which was part of the 2010 Brisbane Festival. The paintings were also acquired by AFTM for their collection and touring exhibition.
August 2010:	Participated in the Brotherhood of the Wordless repeat performance of <i>Air for the Birds</i> at the Judith Wright Centre in Brisbane as part of the Queensland Poetry Festival.
January 2010:	Participated in <i>'Air For the Birds'</i> – a program of assisted recitals performed by the Brotherhood of the Wordless at the State Library, Brisbane. All poetic works were written by members throughout 2009 in collaboration with performance poet 'Ghost Boy' and performed with assistance from other professional musicians and poets.
November 2009	Peter's artwork appeared on the cover of the AGOSCI magazine (aka Australian Group On Severe Communication Impairment) along with an article he wrote.
July 2009:	Commenced a Creative Writing degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast
November 2008	Key Note Speaker at the Disability Services Queensland "Connecting the Pieces SFO8" Conference in Brisbane.
November 2008:	Performed in the play <i>'Dreemz'</i> along with 20 other members of the Brotherhood of the Wordless** at the QUT Campus, Carseldine. Brotherhood members wrote their own parts with assistance from songwriters and musicians and performed using Facilitated Communication to portray their struggles to overcome fear, doubt and public suspicion of themselves and their writings.
Sept. 2008:	Key Note Speaker at Disability Action Week Cocktail Party at Q1 Building, Gold Coast.
March 2008:	Co-presented at "Partners in Practice" Conference in Brisbane run by Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) for 200 of its professional and specialist staff. Peter helped present "Understanding Movement, Sensory and Communication Differences" and shared his experiences on the "Panel of Experts" panel discussion. At this conference, one of Peter's larger artworks was purchased by DSQ, Brisbane.

March 2008:	Peter welcomed Rosemary Crossley (developer of the Facilitated Communication system) and Annie McDonnell (subject of the film ' <i>Annie's Coming Out</i> ') to Brisbane at the launch of the Facilitated Communication Training Association Qld Inc.
Feb. 2008:	Art exhibition at the Maroochydore Library resulting in a number of sales.
Sept. 2006:	Presented poetry at the "Shared Visions" Conference at Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast.
2005:	Wrote, illustrated and published three children's books: ' <i>The Handsome Man</i> ', ' <i>The Way Home</i> ' and ' <i>The Big Black Cloud</i> '. These books have been distributed nationally and to France, England and America and are available in local and national libraries.
September 2005	Contributor in <i>Tapping on the Heart of the World</i> – a collection of poetry and prose written by Brotherhood of the Wordless members.
2004 – 2007	Part of the innovative performance trio QWERTY with internationally renowned musician Linsey Pollak and local singer, Terry Delaney, who interpreted Peter's ad-libbed lyrics in music and song. The group performed extensively at local and national venues including a standing ovation at the Woodford Folk Festival.
April 2003:	Performed at the Wataboshi Festival in Brisbane (for artists with disabilities) as one of the main characters in " <i>Horse to Water</i> " – a collaborative show directed by renowned local musician, Linsey Pollack with vocals from Amy Hunter and Terry Delaney

** *The Brotherhood of the Wordless* is a group of writers and poets with assorted disabilities that impair their ability to communicate. They meet monthly to support and practice their writing skills.