



From left, Jeremy Lepisto's works *All the stories* (Crate series); *General guidance* (Crate series); *Central supply* (Shipment series); *The last shipment* (Shipment series).

Meditations on journeying

Jeremy Lepisto's work is primarily autobiographical and draws on his own life experiences. Lepisto with his partner, artist Mel George, has recently moved to Canberra from Portland, Oregon, in the United States. This life-changing move was encapsulated most succinctly and with wit in his work called *Drawn Across*, shown at the Canberra Glassworks in 2009. In this glass wall panel the artist depicted himself drawn on a piece of sliding glass that could be moved across the work from Portland, symbolised by an image of the old Portland water tower, and the new environment of Canberra, represented by the smokestack of the Canberra Glassworks where his work was then centred.

The exhibition now at the Beaver Galleries continues the artist's meditations on moving locations and what he has left behind. Lepisto's imagery is driven by his environment so his work is concerned with his need to engage with his new surroundings in the context of re-establishing his art practice.

Works from the *crate*, the *pallet* and the *shipment* series in the exhibition deal with the transfer of actual material possessions from



KERRY-ANNE COUSINS
of import - studio glass by Jeremy Lepisto

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one continent to another. They reference the transference of more elusive things like memories and experiences that make up the interior landscape of one's life.

The *crate* series are works based on the metal containers used to move goods around the world. I am always intrigued to see vast numbers of these shipping crates in a big enclosure near the docks at Yarraville in Melbourne and I share the artist's fascination with the idea of them as containers of both the tangible and intangible.

Lepisto makes small glass crates ranging in size from roughly 25cm to 63cm in height from kiln-formed clear glass. Like old peep shows we are permitted to see, as

if through a window, the layered images of urban landscape inscribed on the interior glass surfaces. Lepisto uses a technique somewhat akin to etching as the line drawings are etched into the glass, which is then rubbed with enamel paints before firing. The images are of urban views of brick buildings, telegraph wires, traffic lights and the water towers and other urban structures in a gritty palette of soft smoky greys.

In the work *All the stories*, three glass crates are stacked asymmetrically. The inscribed image on the glass is that of an urban brick building. The title of the work is at once a literal description but also hints at the stories that are contained within the building itself.

In the *pallet* series, which are displayed as two-dimensional wall pieces, the artist revisits a theme he has addressed previously. The glass panels are enhanced by abstracted geometric shapes. They reinterpret in glass the wooden boards that make up the pallets which provide stacking frameworks for the shipping crates. These works are not as engaging as the other works in the exhibition as they lack the structural depth and layered imagery that makes

the other works more visually complex.

In the three works of Lepisto's latest series, called the *shipment* series, the glass crates become even more highly structured with the concept of these multiple viewpoints evolving into a number of images in multiple units. The wooden pallets have been translated into fabricated steel frameworks that support the glass structures. In the work called *central supply*, four glass cylinders are joined together to enclose an image of a traditional Australian homestead with an old style bore water windmill. Indeed Lepisto seems intrigued with water towers. An earlier series of works made in the United States in 2005 was called *tower*. The old town water tower in Portland, a recurring image in Lepisto's work, has become linked through association with Australian water tanks in a way that may have some interesting ramifications for an interchange of imagery. Indeed the four glass cylinders that make up the glass structure of this work appear as symbolic forms that evoke the water tanks of both landscapes.

In the *shipment* series, the images are seen as if through a

porthole of clear glass surrounded by a more opaque glass body. This suggests the images are themselves clearly perceptible but are perceived through layers of memory.

In the most technically complex work in the exhibition, called *Two deliver tomorrow*, two glass containers are placed one on top of the other on two adjustable steel pallets. Each side of this multifaceted work delivers a different viewpoint so that the image changes as you move around it. The urban landscape remains fixed but your view of it is determined by your orientation.

Lepisto has a well-constructed art practice rich in fertile material to explore. In addition he has the skill to carry through his ideas and achieve highly accomplished works. It is no surprise that his career has included many positions where he has used his technical expertise to teach others. He is about to embark again on his own journey of discovery as he begins to study sculpture for his PhD at the Australian National University. What impact further study will have on an artist who seems so confident in his medium of glass will be interesting to see.