

A glass artist turned sculptor with a bright future

Cass Proudfoot 20 August 2019



Jeremy Lepisto, *Open House* (from *the Container Series*), 2017, glass, wood and steel, 28 x 76.2 x 25.4 cm. Photo: Rob Little.

Jeremy Lepisto isn't your standard sculpture graduate. For starters, it has taken him ten years to finally stage his graduating art show. That is a long time, even for a PhD.

"It has been a long process," he agrees. "First I built a studio to build the work, then other people wanted me to build things for them".

His technical skills across sculptural building and glass casting have kept him very busy collaborating with other artists, as well as on commercial projects. Recently he created a glass sun for the Questacon foyer and crafted a miniature glass I-beam as an engineering award.

Additionally, Lepisto works as a [sculpture tech](#) at the art school, and assists with work, health and safety requirements. It is a wonder his PhD got completed at all, but somehow it did.

"It is exciting to finally have it done," he says. "A lot of people supported me through this time."

The lead up to the exhibition was especially busy with the Gundagai [Dog on the Tuckerbox](#) coming through the sculpture workshop for urgent repairs. And with the art school now in preparation for Open Day on 31 August, the fast pace continues.



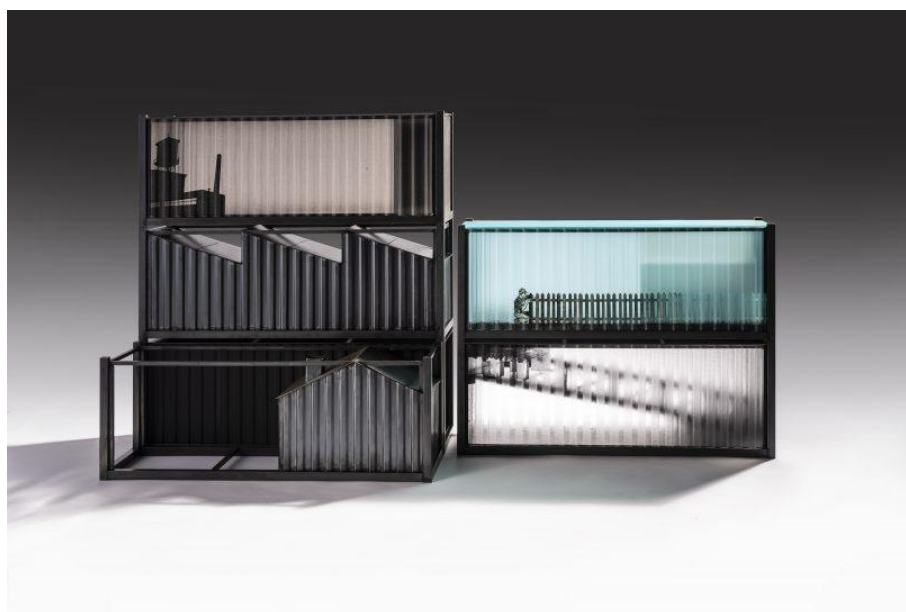
Jeremy Lepisto at work. Photo: Adam McGrath.

Lepisto came to Canberra from the US to study sculpture, but his background is in glass art. His impressive graduation piece combines sculpture and glass. Over several years he has made a stack of precisely crafted steel shipping containers, with images baked into the corrugated glass surfaces. The containers stack together in various ways and also stand alone.

The artist is interested in the shipping container as the basis of our globally connected economy, and in the lasting impact they have had. Shipping containers travel far and wide moving personal items, agricultural products or building materials around the world.

The glass in Lepisto's small containers is corrugated to reflect the industrial nature of shipping containers. Small images hint at the contents or purpose of the containers. One container shows a man with a wheelbarrow, another has an image of Lepisto himself on a mirror deep inside.

The process of putting photographic images onto glass is something Lepisto has perfected, and he plans to return to the US later this year to teach others his methods. He carves into the glass then uses a dark glass dust to create the pictures. The images are then seared into the glass surface over many hours in a hot kiln.



Jeremy Lepisto, *Container Series*, 2017-18, mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Rob Little.

In fact, it was glass that forged his connection to Canberra. "I was already well aware of Canberra because I was working at Bullseye glass in Portland," Lepisto explains.

Bullseye in the US was the first company in the world to formulate and manufacture glass that is factory-tested for fusing compatibility, enabling use of multiple mixed colours in glass work. "Canberra as a centre for glass art is actually known internationally," says Lepisto.

Because Bullseye glass studio in Portland provides much of the world's coloured glass for glass blowing and casting, many Canberra glass artists visit to do residencies and to select glass colours.

"Working there I knew lots of the glass people in Canberra already," Lepisto explains. So he packed his entire life into a standard shipping container and moved it all here. And it has paid off. "There are great opportunities here in Canberra with places like Arts ACT, CAPO and Craft ACT. Beaver Galleries took me on. There is the Glassworks for doing large work. There is much more support here than in the US."



Jeremy Lepisto creates images on kiln-formed glass by drawing with a blade and glass dust. Photo C Proudfoot.

So it seems that Lepisto will be sticking around in Canberra even after he graduates from the art school. “Yes – I’ve actually just done my citizenship test,” he says.

After concentrating his efforts on his graduate pieces for so long, Jeremy Lepisto is full of ideas for future work. “I’d actually like to make a life-sized shipping container with glass sides,” he says. “But I’m also just glad to have all the graduate work out of my studio. I have a really small studio on Gilmour road in Queanbeyan, and this work has filled it up”.

Canberrans will have the chance to visit the Queanbeyan studio later this year as part of Design Canberra’s open studio sessions. Do visit if you get the chance. Jeremy Lepisto is one to watch.

Jeremy Lepisto and Carmen Ky graduation exhibition

Open 12 -5 pm until 22 August

ANU School of Art & Design Gallery

Cnr Ellery Cres & Liversidge St, Acton ACT

School of Art and Design Open Day is August 31 from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm.