



Photo: David Field

Watch This Space: Justin Harrick **by Megan Spencer (c) 2014**

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Bendigo artisan Justin Harrick has a lot going on at the moment.

Also known as 'Juxton', not only has the multi-talented sculptor, furniture designer, bike-maker and musician opened a brand new workshop in Eaglehawk's Workspace Australia complex, he's been rapidly expanding his 'product line'.

We meet at the airy, surprisingly large 12m-squared space adjoined by an outdoor work area of equal size. His beautiful "shed dog" Chloe (a 16-month Bull-Arab cross "adoption dog" with a chunky studded collar), sniffs my heels, curiously investigating this new interloper.

"She gets a bit bored here," the 34 year-old grins, affectionately. "I do at least eight hours a day. She bothers me every half-hour. But it's better she's stuck inside than at home chewing up shoes."

Justin tells me that even though he's only weeks into his 3-year rental contract, the site has already been one of much toil and busyness.

So far, on Juxton Manufacturing's freshly-minted books, are a fibreglass teardrop caravan prototype two-years in the making and nearing the end-stages of completion; multiple orders for custom-made motorised pushbikes and tall-bikes (one of his great passions); fabrication of folded-metal magazine racks designed for a Melbourne architect's high-end furniture line (with orders coming in thick and fast); ditto for couch caddies, metal chairs and concrete plinths to go beneath bespoke table tops, and, various horse float repairs.

During any scarce downtime Justin re-paints a rescued forklift and puts together a workbench area for all the "stuff" needed for this whirlwind of productivity.

Greeted by fellow factory owners on arrival with offers to help with "any lifting" of gear and equipment during his recent relocation, Justin tells me the surrounding businesses in this industrial hub

range from farm machinery, welding and site maintenance to fire safety systems, fencing, plastering and molding manufacturers.

Clearly Justin feels at home here, this unassuming, wry man of few words energised by the creativity of the neighbouring manufacturers, whose enterprises border his. Developing his business concept through participation in NEIS (New Enterprise Incentive Scheme), he's excited by the possibility of producing at a higher volume and seeing a bigger picture unfold: that of a long-term, viable business from his handiwork.

“You've got to leave yourself open for opportunities. And it helps [to] separate work from living space” he explains further of his new digs.

Previously, home and work occupied the same property. “I didn't have everything together in one place. There are three spaces but they aren't always suitable or universal [for work.]”

Born and bred in Bendigo, straight out of school Justin worked as a welder in factories around Melbourne, “making semi-trailers.”

Always creative as a child, especially musically – “even when I was working” - at 28 he consciously decided “to go back into creativity... to make it the centre” of his life. He enrolled in Visual Arts at Bendigo TAFE, majoring in Sculpture.

He recounts, “it was difficult because sometimes I was working for people who I didn't like as much as the job. I got money from welding but somewhere along the way I realised I really enjoyed it.”

“I thought ‘*maybe I don't hate my job that much!*’ Maybe I can get out on my own and make things.”

Having wanted to learn sculpture and with a knowledge of moving parts from work, Justin had always “built things from other peoples' drawings.” “Freestyling” at TAFE, he found all his skills “melded together.”

He also found like-minded people with whom he studied and exhibited. “The crazy dreamers”, he smiles, “where it was not so ‘far out’ to drop what you were doing and follow your dreams.”



Justin Harrick in his shed. Photo: David Field

When I ask him if he loves working with metal he answers, “yeah, it's a really permanent thing – it'll outlive me. Steel is really malleable – there's an instant gratification to it. You don't have to wait for it to dry, but there's a lot of heartbreak when things *don't* work.”



The new shed with its multi-year lease also gives him a chance to think of the bigger picture: how things might be “down the track”.

“I have the chance to throw stuff out there; some [ideas] might be good, some bad,” most of which are scrawled on the back of envelopes before they disappear into another. “It’s the only things bills are good for,” he jokes.

But Justin’s work is part of a more serious philosophy. As he shows me his latest tall bike with a retro ‘banana’ seat, he says, “you’re not supposed to touch art, but I want to make artworks that people do touch and use and wreck.”

“If I came back in 100 years, I’d be disappointed if they *weren’t*. You can fix my stuff too – it’s good solid stuff. “

“You can’t smudge a painting. But my stuff you can use and wear out.”

→ More about Juxton-Mgf on [Facebook](#).

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