

The Marble Merchants: Playing Around

SINCE COMPLETING JAMFACTORY'S TWO-YEAR TRAINING PROGRAM IN 2010, GLASS ARTISTS DANIELLE RICKABY AND JAAN POLDAAS HAVE COMBINED FORCES FOR A JOINT CREATIVE ENTERPRISE – THE MARBLE MERCHANTS

Words by Alex Birchmore

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Rickaby and Poldas first met through JamFactory in February 2009, rapidly developing a close professional relationship. In 2008, Rickaby had completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Glass) at the University of South Australia, earning the Australian Decorative and Fine Art Society Prize for her contribution to the graduate exhibition. Further accolades came when her stunning piece *Fescue* won the inaugural Youth Art category of the 2009 Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize. Poldas graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Glass) from Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD), Canada. After securing the Board of Governors Award for Glass at ACAD, Poldas spent the next two years building his portfolio at Pilchuck Glass School, Seattle, and Red Deer College, Alberta, before relocating to Adelaide in 2009.

In addition to their separate practices, Rickaby and Poldas pursue a shared passion as the Marble Merchants. Tracing their infatuation to childhood memories, they hope to awaken in their audience a similar nostalgia, encouraging people to play with and treasure these enchanting objects. Bright, bold colours prevail, with Rickaby citing street art and the Day-Glo palette of the '90s as influences.

At the same time, this contemporary edge is combined with the time-honoured Italian technique of glass cane-making, which Rickaby and Poldas were given the opportunity to investigate during their training. Using this method, pieces of coloured glass are arranged, heated and then stretched to form a "stock", from the end of which individual marbles can be rounded with a steel ring-tool and then removed for final polishing by hand.

This approach and its results are completely distinct to anything achieved by other major marble manufacturers, fostering an innovative blend of consistency and individuality, which sets the Merchants' products apart. Their appeal was recognised recently by Canadian caravan company, Canadream, which commissioned 130 custom marbles for employees around the world. Rickaby and Poldas have been inspired by this project, and hope to complete more corporate commissions in the near future. Both artists commend JamFactory for its help in establishing their careers, citing the Marble Merchants as a perfect example of what can be achieved through that institution's intensive training program and extensive community of practitioners.



Danielle Rickaby and Jaan Poldas
of Marble Merchants
Photographer Brad Bonar