

Adventures in Resin

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Louise Olsen, Stephen Ormandy and Elyse Graham may have taken different creative paths, but they have all ended up in the same place: resin. Olsen and Ormandy are the design duo behind well-known Australian brand Dinosaur Designs, and their story began with a market stall.

‘We took to the markets to make some money to support our art careers because we were just starting out,’ recalls Ormandy. The pair set up their stall next to pop artist Geoffrey Rose, who worked in resin. ‘We were making things in Fimo clay and hand painting everything. He told us to try resin and it worked, because you can reproduce it.’

Smooth-surfaced, chunky jewellery in a technicolour rainbow of shades came first, followed by graceful, organically shaped homewares. ‘We started something that no one was exploring very much. There’s so much opportunity and there’s so much you can do with resin. Our studio is like a big lab in a way — we’re constantly experimenting, adding sand to stones, sterling silver, brass and marble,’ says Olsen. ‘Different materials spark each other up,’ adds Ormandy.

While they no longer hand-paint every piece as they did back in the early days, Olsen and Ormandy say it’s still a very hands-on process. ‘Generally, we make a mould and pour resin into it. Each piece is then hand-sanded and hand-finished,’ says Olsen, adding that it can take up to a week to finish each one.

Painstaking process and the hand-made are also part of Elyse Graham’s work in resin, which often features layers of colour and pattern, and shapes that range from angular to almost crystalline. Graham’s most recent collection beautifully demonstrates her tactile approach. ‘Each leg in our pair of Black Magic Tables is cast, shaped and sanded individually,’ says the Los Angeles-based artist and designer. ‘Although the palette is consistent within the trio of legs for each table, the pattern revealed in each individual leg is unique.’

The forms that emerge give Graham’s work an unexpected quality, as does the experimentation involved in working with resin in this context. ‘Because we use resin outside of its intended purpose, we spend a lot of time problem solving and often, these technical obstacles lead us to further innovations,’ says Graham. ‘The challenges of the material keep it infinitely interesting.’

In fact, it was the challenges of working with the material that captivated Graham in the first place. ‘I was going to coat a few sand-filled balloons with resin to make some colourful, shiny vases for friends. So I went to the hardware store and picked up some pourable “bar-top” resin — it was a complete disaster!’ she recalls. Unable to let go of the idea, Graham researched other types of resin and finally found a product intended for quick prototypes that sets quickly. ‘Here I am, still completely seduced by the material and still exploring ways to use it against its intended purpose to make fantastical objects.’



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A selection of designer Elyse Graham’s fantastical objects and those of Dinosaur Designs will be available in Lane Crawford stores and lanecrawford.com
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Top
All refined resin designs, Black Magic vases by Elyse Graham (far left) are pictured here with Dinosaur Designs’ Stone Servers in Snow Swirl, Large Pebble vase in Black & Snow Swirl, Large Rock Jug in Snow Swirl and Medium Boulder Platter in Vogue Swirl

Right
Elyse Graham’s hypnotic Black Magic vases come in three different sizes

Bottom
Dinosaur Designs offers a selection of resin-based homewares, including bowls, platters, servers and vases in a variety of alluring finishes