



Steve Driscoll: Native Chroma

For those that would like to live amongst medicinal atmospheres; artist Steve Driscoll captures the light and augments the mystery.



In an effort to discover more about your unique perspectives created in paint what do you like to develop, before paint even hits a surface, to generate a concept or project?

There are two main ways I work on development. The first would be studio experimentation, and the other would be getting myself out to nature. When I'm in the city there isn't much time where paint isn't hitting the surface. I like to work in a number of directions while I am coming up with ideas and compare my own reactions to those studies and experiments. The direction I usually chose is the one that most directly puts me into a felt experience. There is a certain sense of awe and wonder that I am always looking for in life, and the places I find it are in nature and the paint itself. I love being small in a huge theatre of a slow moving world. Watching paint move and settle compares to the experience of watching light reflect off of the waters surface. So I guess the time I spend watching and recording is where I do my development.

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You are currently showing at Angell in Canada, what does this body of work show and how has it differed from work previously completed?

Yes, I suppose the main difference with this exhibition is that I focused on creating a more immersive experience. Not just in the individual paintings but also the gallery space as a whole. The installation includes a wall to wall pond which has a wooden boardwalk meandering over it's surface. So the viewer has a distinctly different relationship with the paintings and a typical

gallery experience. After completing the first couple tests with a mini pond in my studio I realized that there would be no point bringing nature inside unless I was willing to paint on the scale of nature. The main piece in the installation is 9 feet tall and 40 feet wide, turning a corner in the gallery midway. The result compares more with a walk around an actual woodland lake than a stroll through an art gallery.



Everything That Dies Someday Comes Back
Urethane on Plastic Panel
78 x 105 inches

We've seen the effort you've gone to in order to make the viewing experience a little different for visitors to this current show. Can you talk about this chosen approach and your opinion of the experience of visiting exhibitions in general?

I really enjoyed creating a new way for people to interact with the work. Only providing a set path of boardwalk and stepping stones to view the show became like an unwritten contract between the viewer and I where in the viewer agreed to experience the show from my perspective. And having that contract allowed me the liberty to make the experience wholly unique and directed. I ended up doing a time-lapse of the opening because I was so curious as to people's interaction with it. I think the pond keeps the show memorable and intensifies engagement.

Is there an aspect to your process that you are particularly proud, or is your practice a cycle, always changing and never the same twice?

I tend to work in small iterations, changing one piece of my work at a time. So my practice is relatively recognizable from year to year but I do try to make each new piece just a little bit better than the last.

Your draw to nature seems to be a strong steer in your vision. You mentioned enjoying the experience of feeling small in an expansive environment, what is it within these natural environments other than the size that draws you in? Why does the natural environment in particular captivate your imagination more than a man made or entirely invented world for instance?

I think it may be more a question of pace. Man made worlds also fascinate me but in a different way. Before being a full time artist I was a builder / renovator and my head still works diligently

at constructing and deconstructing the physical world around me, much like a puzzle. Being in nature I find my mind slow down and a more sensory experience take over. So maybe there is therapeutic element at play there.



Recovered Shore, Urethane on plastic panel, 108 x 480in

Beyond the forms your work depicts, why do you think you've chosen to work in a predominantly abstract/realist way rather than an approach that might be associated with the avant-garde or contemporary art for instance? Do you see flaws in these purely conceptual genres of art, and does this have anything to do with why you chose to work in paint?

Looking back, I don't see ever making that choice. Painting was just always there. I think as an artist we are just trying to communicate things as best we can with whatever language we have at hand. Mine just seemed to take that form of these experimental stinky mediums that I seem to know so well. It was never in response to or criticism of contemporary modes or genres, more just shooting from the hip.

After your recent innovation within the exhibition space, by adding pools of water, what if anything did you think this added to the viewer experience and what do you think other exhibitions could learn from this approach? Do you think that a traditional exhibition format misses something by not adding an experiential mindset to a show? This is something that consumer branding and contemporary art has been exploring for some time?

The pond seemed to take the paintings out of the context of a gallery setting, stripping the white box. Which for non-gallery going viewers seemed to give a greater access to the work, and for the art regulars it gave another vantage point, possibly even a deeper reading of the work. For me the show was more of an experiment than I highly considered idea. From conception to opening was probably close to 3 months. Which is definitely how I like to work. I would like to do some adjustments and try it again. The next iteration I have planned is going to be a solo experience. I would really like to see what happens when the social element is stripped from the viewing.

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I don't think it's an easy thing to understand what a exhibition format should be anymore. Experimentation can certainly add something if done right, but at the end of the day if the work isn't good or the change in exhibition format doesn't fit with the work that is being showed what's the point?

Who would you say are your main influences, both personally and professionally, and what has been there specific influence in your work?

Probably my largest influence would be Paterson Ewen, who was able to depict landscape with an intense physicality. Often his pieces imbue a strong sense of weather just through the recorded process in the work, I have definitely taken to leaving records of the process in my pieces as a result of his.

