

# Art Notes: Richard Allen Morris and Tom Driscoll

The San Diego Art Prize is a cash grant which recognizes excellence in the visual arts. The prize is dedicated to the idea that the visual arts are a necessary and rewarding ingredient of any world-class city and a building block of the lifestyle of its residents. Conceived to promote and encourage dialogue, reflection and social interaction about San Diego's artistic and cultural life.

## Notes by Patricia Frischer, Director of the San Diego Art Prize

### Richard Allen Morris and Tom Driscoll

When I first saw a slim tall painting by Richard Allen Morris, I fell in love. He does nothing less than seduce you with his paint. The squeezes, squishes and dabs are purposeful and spontaneous at the same time. I don't know how that is possible except with a life time of dedication and

honesty to his craft. I did not meet Morris for years after this but found he was a seeker of knowledge. Talking with him is a pleasure as his opinions are insightful and sometimes provocative. These new works with paint weighted to the right on rainbows of colored backgrounds seem meant to be viewed in sequence, like a story read back to front.

Tom Driscoll's new sculpture in this exhibition is cast epoxy resin and takes his work to the next plateau of excellence. Long known as a master

caster, he has modified his molds for each casting and buried mysterious objects in the plastic like insects trapped in ancient amber. These works reference long years spent in maintenance at Scripps Institute of Oceanography, not in La Jolla but the campus in Point Loma near the ships and research faculty. His interaction with the debris of their lives is fascinating. He rescued speakers, compasses, computer parts of all sorts cast in epoxy used to record underwater data. He is not recycling these objects, but his work resonates with their influence and with the interaction of the people he met there. Past works have examined and transformed everyday objects. These new sculptures continue that journey but take us to an exotic new destination. If you could crack open the concrete sculptures these epoxy pieces might emerge like butterflies from their cocoons.

Tom Driscoll met Morris in the early 80's. A friendship formed and when Morris declares, "I think you have got something there," Driscoll knows that his direction is solid.

## Notes by Robin Bright, Artist

### Richard Allen Morris

Richard Allen Morris's work has an odd and wonderful way of changing people's views of what is beautiful without ever making them learn how to like it.

I once took one of his works off a friend's wall for a closer look and I saw that the wall behind it was several shades darker than the surrounding color. Since then I've noticed his works are seldom moved around. They remain in the very same place year after year after year.

I, for one, know of no greater compliment.



Richard Allen Morris, *Winged Voodoo*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 18"  
art courtesy of R..B. Stevenson Gallery, La Jolla  
photo Erubiel Ramos Acevedo

### Double Header:

**Richard Allen Morris  
and emerging artist  
Tom Driscoll**

**September 19  
to November 20, 2009**

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## Notes by Mark Quint, [Quint Contemporary Art](#)

### Richard Allen Morris and Tom Driscoll

I will let others discuss the amazing paintings, sculptures, drawings and collages that Richard Allen Morris and Tom Driscoll have contributed to San Diego and the art world in general. I would like to say something about their characters. Richard, who does not drive, has shown up at almost every exhibition I have had since I opened my gallery in 1981. He has always arrived with kind words of encouragement of insightful remarks, and a very generous spirit. He has also appeared many times with an equally warm hearted and good-humored soul, his wonderful friend and colleague artist, Tom Driscoll. Tom and Richard are not only generous with their spirits and their art, they are liberal with their time and muscle, many times lending hands to help carry heavy artwork, install paintings and sculpture and give knowledgeable advice to me and their fellow artists. I remember in 1985 both of them helping me install a sculpture consisting of a full-sized Porsche car. It had been cut into panels and we had to place it twenty feet high up on a wall on the exterior of my

downtown gallery. They did not balk at the danger nor the aesthetic. They jumped in and got their hands dirty. I saluted their dedication then as I continue to do now.



Tom Driscoll, *Rings*, 2009, cast epoxy resin, 5" x 15" x 6"  
art courtesy of Quint Contemporary Art, La Jolla  
photo Erubiel Ramos Acevedo

### Notes by Ellen Salk, artist

#### Tom Driscoll

Tom Driscoll and I have been contemporaries in the San Diego art scene for over two decades and he has been a touchstone for me as an artist who is continually engaged, exploring, and stretching his medium. I remember visiting his

studio in the Old Church Lofts on E Street when he was working on large cast concrete discs, grayish in color with a highly refined patina, and being struck by the power and subtle beauty of the work. Conversations with Tom at that time made me aware of his process of making and appropriating forms from which he would cast these pieces, and it was clear to me that he was always on the search for usable materials. Tom's decades long night job at an oceanographic research lab provided the perfect opportunity to repossess discarded materials, which then became fertile ground for new creation.

As one follows Tom's work, this impulse towards reappropriation is generally evident. A suite of drawings, each one a single powerful line moving through space, was created by a marker that he had made using large diameter tubing with felt tips. The line was absolutely unique and dependent on this particular

instrument. The lively and inventive show of small assembled wall sculptures at Quint Gallery in 2006 relied on computer packaging as a casting element.

A show of drawings at Soma Gallery in the 90's, in which Tom presented minimal rectilinear forms, each a richly saturated blue, made me aware of his ability to use color selectively and rather spectacularly. In the last decade that color usage has appeared at different periods, providing an interesting punctuation to his more subtle work.

Anyone lucky enough to visit Tom's studio will find an artist consistently working on multiple ideas, always interesting and sometimes surprising. His presence in the community is a continual reminder of the best impulses towards a focused, single minded life-long pursuit of visual expression. It's a pleasure for all of Tom's contemporaries to see his work honored in this exhibition.

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L Street Gallery  
628 L Street, San Diego,  
92101