

ing a tray with a goat on it. An oversize diamond is penetrating the goat's anus. It is nice to see that Williams hasn't gone entirely soft on us.

Several of the paintings are not fully rendered in Williams' typical style and instead use just a few colors to showcase his impeccable drawing skills to great effect. Whether Williams started using this technique as a way to save time or just as an experiment, it would be intriguing to see a whole room or show of these by themselves, because in many ways their graphic quality is more compelling than some of the other work on view. The earth-toned and violet-hued *Gimme, Gimme, Gimme* (2007) depicts an out-of-control Caterpillar-type vehicle with human hands and is a strong metaphor for what led to our current financial crisis. A few of the simpler paintings come across as one-liners and the ostentatious frames are unnecessary, yet when Williams' painting chops are in full force, as in works like *Confluence Between Corsairs* (2006), you can forgive the flamboyant aspects of the installation.

—Chris Bors

SAN FRANCISCO

LAUREN DICIOCCIO

Jack Fischer Gallery

"PAPER OR PLASTIC?" This question, once routinely asked by baggers, has become increasingly loaded; one feels rather guilty at requesting a bag at all, at least in the eco-friendly Northern regions of California which I inhabit, as your checkstand neighbors dutifully show up with reusable canvas totes in hand.

A grouping of striking "plastic" bags, in white and assorted shades of pink with perky red lettering, recently greeted the viewer as Bay area-based artist Lauren DiCioccio presented an assortment of 2- and 3D objects incorporating paper, thread and fabric at Jack Fischer Gallery. Closer inspection revealed the bags to be made of shiny fabric, organza, meticulously hand-embroidered with "Thank You" and "Have a Nice Day" as well as roses, leaves and the occasional butterfly.

The compelling array of painstakingly hand-crafted objects referenced an assortment of timely topics: our throwaway culture, the increasing substitution of the virtual or synthetic for the real, and the anxious quality everyday objects assume when recontextualized. DiCioccio's choice of embroidery lends a certain feminist quality to the work, referencing the second-class status attributed to "women's work" — to crafts such as stitchery, often dismissed as insignificant.

DiCioccio references as well artistic preoccupation with simulacra — Baudrillard's assertion that the experience of the real has been replaced by simulations and symbols. Certainly, as we spend increasing portions of our days interacting through a mechanical interface, experiencing reality at an increasing distance, we may begin to long for "real" reality, for the tactile and sensory experiences of handling print media, for example; for working, as artists, with low-tech media we can touch, feel and smell, as well as see.

In a tour-de-force move, skulls made of felt play with themes of mortality and allude as well to both Joseph Beuys and Damien Hirst. *Beaded Skull (for the love)* appears simian, its thick cream-colored felt studded with tiny clear beads. Buck teeth gape clownishly.

Most poignant of the many diverse objects on view were Di-



Lauren DiCioccio, *Thank You x7*, 2009

Cioccio's recreations of water bottles constructed from fabric and embroidery. *SOFT WATER*'s flaccid forms offered melancholy replicas of the ubiquitous flasks. Evian, Fiji, Deer Park, Arrowhead and Poland Spring are rendered with an accuracy of attention suggesting portraiture. That which was worthless, and casually discarded, thus becomes valuable — even precious.

Following a different conceptual thread was a grouping of wall-hung "SEWN-NEWS" — papers stitched with intricate, vibrantly-hued embroidery, portraying Joe Biden, Barack Obama and Tim Geitner, as well as *The New York Times* cover 28AUG09 (*edward kennedy's funeral*). Colored skeins trailed off, dangling toward the floor; tiny stitches and tangled threads suggesting thorny issues and unfinished business.

DiCioccio has also hand-embroidered a deck of playing cards, which may be handled with white gloves, the artist offering to schedule actual card games by appointment during the run of the show. These reference the idea of gaming as a shared pastime involving neither computer chips nor the dismemberment of zombies.

As real experiences and objects become increasingly rare, with convincing simulations and stand-ins taking their place, the art world, as a mirror of its culture, reflects the tense and conflicted state in which we find ourselves — DiCioccio's work presents a bittersweet evocation of our condition.

—Barbara Morris

JUD BERGERON

Mark Wolfe Contemporary Art

"I WILL WAIT QUIETLY ... Will I quietly wait Quietly I will wait." Bill Berkson's eight-line poem from 1995 is composed of variations of just four words. The poet, who loved San Francisco's beatnik writers and lovingly retraced their steps in North Beach, was, despite his talent, beleaguered by drug and alcohol addictions, which eventually led to his early death ten years ago in New Orleans. Now his friend since childhood, the sculptor Jud Bergeron, has retraced his poetry in order to commemorate Berkson's life, using the shapes of the letters typewritten and handwritten on scraps of paper to create enlarged letters in steel and wood; from these he creates sculptures, as well as drawings depicting the verbal/sculptural building blocks before sculptural assembly. The works assume, as poets do, that 26 verbal elements can, in their various permutations, condense, clarify and capture, in abstract form, the world of sensation and emotion, enabling that world to leap from brain to brain through time. Bergeron, estranged from his talented but addicted friend, "had lots of grief and guilt" on learning of his death, but he has created here, after a year's work, a moving memorial to Berkson and, perhaps, all poets and writers, renowned or unknown.

As timely as Bergeron's methodology may be, his works evoke the timeless, elegiac and archaic. *Vessel* is a cone composed of alternating stacked rings of metal (from which letters have been cut away) and thickets of metal branches; it suggests an urn, but also a tornado — a brainstorm. *Second Chances*, taking its poignant title from another poem, is a tall orange-brown cone made of wooden letters and clamps, a flaming pillar reminiscent of Van Gogh's ecstatic, trembling cypresses. *Payday Chinaman Burning Lilies Off the Damned*, also poetically titled, takes the same tree-flame form, but here the white capital letters are less important than the dark

metal branches, suggestive on trees in winter. *An Incomplete Life* is a life-sized standing nude figure made of dark steel letters, minus an arm and part of its head. The idea of absence recurs more loftily in *Ascension*, with its wall-borne aura or cascade of white letters defining the void left by the poet, now gone, translated (in the old religious terminology) to a better place. *Cairn* refers to piles of rocks heaped over graves, and this slightly conical dome of wooden letters laid in rows like bricks recalls igloos, the *tholos* tombs of archaic Greece, and the busy beehive of the firing creative cerebrum.

The graphite drawings of Bergeron's wooden or metal letters, whether enlarged from hand-lettered or typewritten prototypes, suggest architecture, engineering, geology and ruins. *Figure 5* depicts curvy handwritten wooden letters, the plywood layers clearly visible, doweled together, but seemingly floating in white space; *Figure 11*

shows them lying stacked, dappled by sunlight filtered through foliage, or blotched by dripping water, atop a black background; in *Figure 13*, the magnified plywood layers suggest geological strata; in *Figure 7* the forms wriggle like deep-sea marine life. *Figure 6*, probably based on *Payday Chinaman* in progress, replaces the hand lettering with blocky sans-serif capital letters that have been pierced by a framework of diagonal metal struts. *Figure 14*, *Figure 15* and *Figure 16* are tabletop-sized abstract sculptures made up of the steel left once the letters have been cut away.

The Surrealist painter Yves Tanguy once wrote a letter inside a drawing of one of his undulating biomorphic landscapes, the words inscribed in perspective: "*Pardonnez-moi cette façon stupide de vous écrire, pardon me this stupid way of writing.* Art, broadly speaking, is possibly the most intelligent way of writing to the dead and the unborn, those secret companions that Paul Klee once claimed.

—DeWitt Cheng



Lud Bergeron, *Payday Chinaman Burning Lillies Off The Damned*, 2008

ing, is possibly the most intelligent way of writing to the dead and the unborn, those secret companions that Paul Klee once claimed.

WASHINGTON DC

EDWARD BURTYNSKY
Corcoran Gallery of Art

SINCE HIS "OIL EPIPHANY" over a decade ago, experienced while driving a car powered by gasoline and partially constructed with petroleum products on a tarmac road, photographer Edward Burtynsky has been traveling the globe steadily chronicling the soup to nuts of what he calls the "key building block of the last century." From extraction and refining, to the car culture — and the freeways and mind-numbing suburban landscape it has promoted — to oil's denouement in the form of tanker salvage, abandoned oil fields and vast dumps filled with automotive detritus, Burtynsky explores it all in his large-format color photographs that are haunting meditations on the real cost of oil.

Regarding these surreal landscapes transformed by man, we realize how totally disconnected we are from what actually happens in oil production. Like Upton Sinclair before him, Burtynsky pulls off the veil, showing us things we weren't meant to see. These otherworldly landscapes of mind-boggling scale compel us to consider the flip

SCOPE

ArtShow

International Contemporary Art Show

scope-art.com

2008 June 15-20 • 2009 July 23-26 • 2010 Oct 15-18 • Miami Dec 2-5/10