



DIANE BURCHETT

Bigger is not always better, not with houses or companies or even bank accounts, certainly not with art—but sometimes it is. Diane Burchett's work is a case in point. Burchett is a devoted painter, and a painter of every topic under the sun, from flowers to feathers to tchotchkes to landscapes, all conventional enough topics for a realist painter to handle. And handle them conventionally she

does, at a modest scale fitting such modest subjects. Where her work goes beyond the conventional is in a pair of larger format canvases that wear their ambition and their importance as a person might wear their heart on their sleeve. One panel tackles the humanitarian and cultural disaster that was Hurricane Katrina, paying wrenching tribute to the artist's neighbors as they waded through waist high water, rescued each other from the roofs of flooded homes, and sometimes died in the process. Another reworks the American flag to represent soldiers, relief workers and Iraqis who have died in the current war. Leaving aside the unfortunate omission of an Islamic symbol alongside the Christian and Jewish ones included here as memorial elements, what's truly moving about these paintings is how hard they try to represent two of the most tragic moments of recent history. They are history paintings for today, and historic moments have always been the subject of choice for ambitious painters, especially those who take realism seriously. Yes, digital media have all but taken over the role of painting in marking the historical record, but reproductive media don't catch everything. We still need painters to make sure that hearts are worn where they belong: on our sleeves.

—Lori Waxman

