

approval and countless other national accolades. The coming-of-age novel, packed with vivid imagery and ardent language, skillfully brings to life both human and animal personae as it draws the reader into its pages. It's an unexpected diamond in the rough in today's quick-lit landscape. [www.davidwroblewski.com](http://www.davidwroblewski.com)

**READERS' CHOICE**

**John Shors**

This Boulder-based scribe burst onto the literary scene with *Beneath a Marble Sky* in 2006, followed it up smashingly with *Beside a Burning Sea* in 2008, and is launching hit number three—*Dragon House*—a tale of power, sacrifice, love, and redemption in Vietnam, this fall. His poignant story lines and vivid drama make for honest-to-goodness page-turners, and Shors' finely honed knack for bringing history to life gives his work depth and context that set it apart from others in its genre. [www.beneathamarblesky.com](http://www.beneathamarblesky.com), [www.besideaburningsea.com](http://www.besideaburningsea.com), [www.dragonhousebook.com](http://www.dragonhousebook.com)

**TOP NEWLY ELECTED POLITICIAN**

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**Jared Polis**

Jared Polis, who was elected in November to Mark Udall's old congressional seat, is the kind of smart, young guy with legitimate business experience that's all too often lacking in the lawyer-heavy Democratic Party. And although much has been made over his being the first openly gay member of Congress to be elected to a freshman term, it's clear he's far more conservative than many of his fellow Dems. In December, while Washington, D.C., was scrambling to find a way to save the Big Three automakers, Polis penned a prescient editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* advising that bankruptcy might be the best option. Four months later, President Obama took the same tack.



David Wroblewski  
TOP LOCAL AUTHOR

**READERS' CHOICE**

**Barack Obama**

It's little surprise our readers picked President Obama as their favorite newly elected politician: In November, he became only the third Democratic presidential candidate in the past 50 years to take Colorado. To win, Obama spread a lot of love and spent a lot of time in our square state during the campaign. Obama should tread carefully, though: He also finished second in our readers' choice for Top Politician to Vote Out of Office.

**TOP POLITICIAN TO VOTE OUT OF OFFICE**

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**(No One)**

Truthfully, it was kinda hard to come up with someone deserving of this award—mostly because we've recently rid ourselves of so many bad apples. To wit: The 4th Congressional District voted Marilyn Musgrave out of office last November; Tom Tancredo (thankfully) retired; and State House Rep. Doug Bruce couldn't even win his primary this past August.

**READERS' CHOICE**

**Bill Ritter**

5280 readers ain't so happy with Governor Ritter, who's seen his once-deep political well dry up. He campaigned across the state for Amendment 58, which would eliminate tax breaks for energy companies, only to see it fail spectacularly at the polls in

November. In January, Ritter upset the Democratic faithful—not to mention allies Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and former speaker of the House Andrew Romanoff—when he plucked Michael Bennet, the former superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, to replace Ken Salazar as U.S. senator. Ritter's popularity, once at 70 percent, has dropped to a paltry 50 percent. Ritter better hope it doesn't fall any farther in the next 18 months—he faces re-election in 2010.

**TOP LOCAL ARTIST**

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**Quang Ho**

Ephemeral moments of a nude woman on her bed. A graceful ballerina at the bar. Energetic chefs working in a Denver kitchen. With Denver's Quang Ho, you're never entirely sure what you're going to get when it comes to subject matter. What you do know is that it will be absolutely gorgeous—highly textured oils give each painting a breath of life, and Ho's use of color makes his work glow. The Vietnam-born artist, who has lived in Denver for decades, teaches at the Art Students League of Denver and owns his own gallery, Gallery 1261. *Gallery 1261, 1261 Delaware St., 303-571-1261, www.quangho.com*

**READERS' CHOICE**

**Chris Guarino**

If Tim Burton and Marilyn Manson were to create art together, you might get something as explicit and thought-provoking as the sculptures, illustrations, and photography that come from the mind of Denver artist Chris Guarino. Although Guarino works out of his home studio, his work is often displayed at Rock the Cradle and Motorsports Gallery. Take a peek at his creepy work at [www.chrisguarino.com](http://www.chrisguarino.com).

**TOP LOCAL JEWELRY DESIGNER**

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**Franki Morales Cook**

Although she only began designing jewelry full-time in 2003, Franki Morales Cook's work can already be seen in boutiques across the country. A self-taught artist, her "Out of My Hands" collection ranges from a classic aesthetic—an abalone and pearl bracelet—to a found-object approach, like a Gustav Klimt portrait pendant decorated with crystals and set in an antique frame. See her work in the Denver Art Museum gift shop. *100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, 720-865-4488, www.denverartmuseum.com; www.outofmyhands.com*

**READERS' CHOICE**

**Lizzie Sarah Designs**

A University of Denver international relations graduate, Samantha Sussman turned her passion for designing jewelry into a regular gig after a search for the "perfect job" proved unsuccessful. Letting her interest in far-flung locales spur her creative process, Sussman's gold and sterling-silver jewelry uses beads and items found during her travels abroad (Peru, Israel, Jordan, Egypt) as accents for her fun, colorful, and one-of-a-kind pieces. [www.lizziesarahdesigns.com](http://www.lizziesarahdesigns.com)

**TOP ENTREPRENEUR**

**EDITORS' CHOICE**

**CUBS Bags & Accessories**

Boulder businesswomen Judy Godec and Alexis Baile got the fairly brilliant, environmentally sound, and increasingly profitable idea of collecting fabric remnants from local manufacturers that otherwise would have gone into a landfill, and turning them into custom-made handbags. The often high-quality fabrics also grace diaper bags, pet beds, and scarves. The CUBS (Cool Usable Belongings Sustainable) line is unique, gorgeous, and crafted in Boulder County. *1740 Skyway Drive, Unit B, Longmont, 303-547-6220, www.cubsbags.com*