

Edith Garcia on the go

Just in from London, the American-born sculptor is taking ceramics to strange new heights.



By MARY ABBE • mabbe@startribune.com



Standing just over 5 feet tall, Edith Garcia is a little more than double the height of some of her largest sculptures, and she radiates their same bristly energy. Peering through narrow glasses framed in coral (top) and lime (bottom) she annotates her busy schedule with rapid-fire commentary.

A mere 10 days after arriving in Minneapolis from London, where she and her British-born husband live, the shelves of her small, dusty studio at the Northern Clay Center (NCC) are stacked with eight new sculptures. Armed with a \$5,000 grant from the McKnight Foundation, she is artist-in-residence at the Clay Center through March. She's already shown her work to kindergartners at Sheridan School in north Minneapolis and will do a free slide lecture at the NCC on Thursday.

"I can't stop," Garcia said, grinning amiably at the intensity of her life. "I work for myself. I have to get up early and work late. My motto is, 'Nobody is going to do it for me.' And I've been very lucky. I follow my work wherever it takes me, and it has its own voice."

Now she's prepping for exhibitions. Through Feb. 6 she's in a show at the California College of the Arts in Oakland. Her small "phantom" sculptures with missing body parts — vanished torsos, stray limbs or heads — will be shipped off to "Ceramic Art London," an important festival opening March 3 at the Royal College of Art. Some of her raging, two-headed beasts with strange fists and distorted bodies will go to Portland, Ore., for a national show, also in March, while others will stay in Minnesota for a September exhibit at the Clay Center. A book she's edited, "The AV History of VJing," about the video shows that accompany rock concerts, is due out in September.

"The driving principle in my work is the psychological struggle we have with our internal animal," she said. "When people get really animated, I feel it's their primitive selves coming out. I don't want to just copy what we look like, but to fragment the human form in different ways, to take out a whole chunk of the forehead or jaw. That's what keeps me interested."

Born in Los Angeles, Garcia grew up in El Paso, Texas, and Mexico. Spanish is her first language, English her fluent second. She finished a BFA in sculpture at Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1998 and an MFA at California College of Arts and Crafts in 2004. Since then she has jump-started her career with generous grants (Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, Archie Bray Foundation of Helena, Mont., and Crafts Council of the United Kingdom), exhibition and travel opportunities. It was on a 2001 Jerome travel grant that she met English digital artist Robin Rimbaud, known professionally as Scanner, whom she married in April 2004.

"He's global and works all over the place, but we'll keep him out of this because he gets enough press," she said of her husband. As for her own skyrocketing career, she's aiming for China, Japan, Korea and other ceramic capitals. "International recognition is something you strive for; it doesn't come on its own. But I'm only 30. I've got time."

(Garcia talk 6:30 p.m. Thu., free. Northern Clay Center, 2424 Franklin Av. E., Mpls. 612-339-8007 or www.northernclaycenter.org.)



Edith Garcia's figures fragment the human form.

Mary Abbe • 612-673-4431

