



Edith Garcia  
The End of the  
Otra Vez Series

*Article by Robin Rimbaud*

*Otra Vez is a body of work that erases the boundaries of what the natural world intended, and explores new ways to extend the human body in sculpture.*



*Un Animal*. 2005. Handbuilt stoneware, underglazes. 34 x 33 x 28 cm.

WHEN EDITH GARCIA OPENS THE DOOR TO HER unassuming chaotic studio in the East End district of London, I am struck by the variety of works around the space. The floor is covered in a blend of detritus, dust and cardboard boxes; shelves are piled high with books, photographs, magazine clippings taped to the wall. Garcia has been in this space for almost a year, yet it looks like a lifetime. Since she arrived here from California, the area has already changed with loft apartment developments threatening to devour every last gasp of light. "In 2004, I finally arrived in this urban chaos that is formally known as London," she said, "or 'home' as it is to me now. Inevitably this has created a shift in my perception of people and the city, drawing on the influences and frictions brought out in such an environment. I began to realise that London is considerable in physical scale but claustrophobic in personal space."

Garcia speaks about her current work with a speed and intensity that her sculptures themselves seem to exhibit. She explains that the *Milk'ed* series of works that I first saw in Minneapolis were searching out an idea of how people suck the energy from you. "I was recognising how people would milk the energy from others and wanted to create works that offered an insight into the circumstances and experiences that drain our energy; those moments that continue to siphon our inspiration and steal from our lives."

With the hindsight of having been such a frequent traveller, and now living in such an expansive city, she began to discover the limitations of having no means to transport work, and especially with only small-sized kilns to work with. Immediately her practice was faced with numerous new limitations that she was forced to acknowledge and respond to. With this in mind, she began to design a series of work that fell comfortably within these constrictions but was able to explore and create new areas of interest. She was determined to create work that continued to show her unique voice as well as deliver the concepts behind the work to the viewer. Out of these restrictions was born the *Otra Vez Series* (2005). "These works deal with the animal self, translating those moments of intense emotion and wanting to claw your way out of your skin into clay," she explains, "they became visual diagrams of the internal struggle of being human and the changing perceptions that we have of our physical self, clearly influenced by the alteration in my surroundings and lifestyle." In just a few months these struggles produced the entire series of 10 artworks.

Puzzled by these images of body as broken, distorted, contorted, I was curious to solve the puzzle hidden within these shapes. Her works can be troubling and vicious, abstract and yet figurative, or even elegiac and arrestingly seductive. Garcia was quick to respond. "This body of work explores the fragmentation of the figure, as well as creating a fusion between my sculptural production and my painting work, drawing and painting directly on to the works themselves. Being able to create a relationship between the object and the surface itself offered a greater depth to the work, presenting a secondary dimension in which to immerse the viewer, beyond the physical item, its linear trajectory interspersed with patterns and shapes on the surface."

Sometimes it is almost as if she has been fighting with the object itself, the painterly aspect against the permanent physicality of the clay, *Otra Vez*, continues this exploration of surface and shape but in turn radically deconstructs the figurative form. "I began to question how far one could actually push a figurative sculpture, to still engage an audience yet still offer a contemplative experience, to question the form and function and still respond emotionally. With multiple limbs, eyes, illusory faces, the works push the idea of comfort and security within the object."



*Desaparecidos*. 2005. Hand built stoneware, underglazes. 43 x 25 x 20 cm.

In *Osico de Animal/Mouth of an Animal* (2005), she has elongated the human skull to create a long unsettling form combined with a perfectly circular mouth, which features large grimacing teeth. The work speaks of both the physical force of a bite and the use of words spoken through the mouth. Barely pausing for breath she explains: "The addition of a multiple human mouth drawn onto the surface emphasises the theme and continues to break down the human figure to its elemental form. If you consider that the human body consists of essentially meat and bone, I am learning to move the clay and brush as if it were flesh. The work speaks of a violence of the primitive which steps back to my initial encounters with early Mexican and African sculptures, and our relationship with our own mortality."

And where to next? In some ways her move to London, a city where you can easily slip into the stream of life and just disappear, suggests a potential way

forward. She is presently developing the *Phantom* (2005-06) a series of works that explore the raw animal in the city, "where once you would have foraged for food and a position in the pack, today you fight for your social position and comforts. I am developing ideas around the idea of invisibility and the dissolving of the individual in the urban environment". Clay will envelop negative shapes of the figure, suggesting the ghostly traces of what was once a person, but only offer the embedded silhouette within the density of the material. This body of work will be developed and presented during her McKnight Residency at the Northern Clay Center in 2006. One can only imagine how this journey will influence her new work but one thing is for certain, she won't be invisible.

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Robin Rimbaud is an art critic and artist.  
Caption title page: *Attached*. 2005. Handbuilt stoneware, underglazes. 6 x 21 x 12 cm.