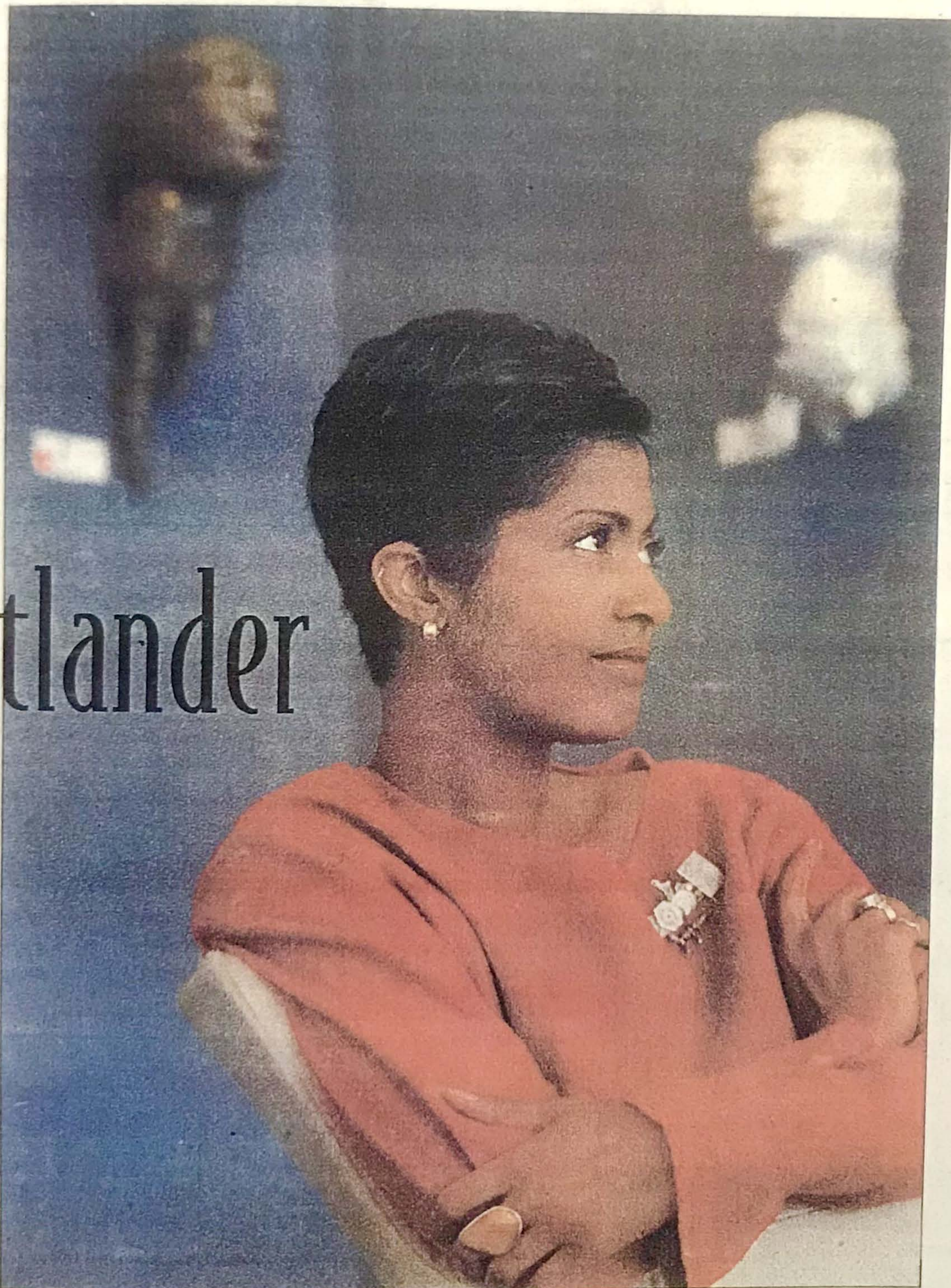


ART

Colorful compositions

Two artists welcome the new year with colorful compositions in an exhibition opening tonight at the Bloomington Art Center. Bloomington resident Sharon McKisson garnishes her lush, abstract paintings with collages of silk fabric, delicate Asian paper and bits of gold leaf. Her "People Joining Hands" series

includes the silver-blue "Cathedral Arch," shown here. McKisson's buoyant and sometimes moody abstractions will be paired with paintings, monoprints and constructions made from recycled materials by Mary Bergs. (Reception 6-8 p.m. today. Bloomington Art Center, 10206 Penn Av. S., Bloomington. Free. 952-563-4777.) — *Mary Abbe*



Flatlander

Moonlighting news anchor **Robyne Robinson** is a do-it-yourself gallery owner with a clear view of her niche in the market.

By Doug Hanson
Special to the Star Tribune

Across the street from Kramarczuk's Deli in near northeast Minneapolis, the display windows of a former flower shop permit a glimpse upward at an ornate, pressed-tin ceiling typical of the old neighborhood's working-class roots.

But new track lighting runs across this ceiling. Flatland Gallery, founded six months ago by KMSP-TV news anchor Robyne Robinson, has joined the neighborhood's mix of venerable institutions (Kramarczuk's, Nye's) and newly arrived coffeehouses and nightclubs.

"When I opened and took the paper off the windows," Robinson said, "the staff from the Times Bar and Cafe stood on the curb, clapping. And the folks from Kramarczuk's brought over Ukrainian sausage."

Robinson grew up in Chicago. "In high school I took advanced courses at the Chicago Art Institute and wanted to become an art historian or curator. I always dreamed of owning my own art gallery."

She moved to the Twin Cities in 1990 and has formed definite opinions about the local arts

Star Tribune photo by Jane Hwang

Artist Edith Garcia with three of her favorite stoneware sculptures, part of a show called "Milk-ed" on display at Flatland Gallery.



Star Tribune photo by Kyndell Harkness



Star Tribune photo by Jane Hwang

Garcia's grotesque sculptures, their faces and teats ghoulishly rendered, represent our exploitation by others.

scene. "We have one of the country's most underrated arts and entertainment communities, and it's underrated most by the people who live here," Robinson said. "Too often, artists are brought in from either coast, and we're told that this is what art is. In a subliminal way we're telling ourselves we're not good enough."

Flatland exhibits local artists in a variety of styles. Already it has shown glass by Ta-Coumba Aiken, Luis Fitch's pre-Columbian-inspired semi-abstract paintings, book art from Rory Sparks, acrylic and ink abstractions by Jason Jaglo, photo transfers on the theme of silent actress Clara Bow by Geoff Mitchell, and the playful small paintings of Dean Lucker and Ann Wood.

On display through Jan. 12 are Edith Garcia's glazed stoneware sculptures. Ghoulishly white, grotesque heads line the walls. Each has a neck that becomes an udder, with badly beat-up teats dangling below. The show's title, "Milk-ed," spells out the theme of our exploitation by others. The heads are too repetitive and the concept obvious, but the work does have a disturbing intensity.

A NEW CLIENTELE

Robinson seeks emerging artists and offers them a six-month commitment that can be extended if both sides agree. "Some younger artists hesitate to give up their independence for a full gallery commitment," said Garcia, explaining the appeal of the sort of agreement Robinson offers.

Robinson asked Garcia for works that could sell for under \$1,000, since Flatland wants affordable art that can attract a new generation of buyers every bit as "emerging" as the artists themselves.

"I don't want the Pillsburys; I want their grandkids," said Robinson. "I'm looking for patrons who are starting to grow, whose tastes are changing; the

ones who had posters on their walls in college. Posters were my first love. I started getting them framed. Then I began collecting art."

Robinson and other gallery owners such as Shelley Holzemer have cooperated on interlinked Web sites and a gallery-scene brochure. Said Holzemer, "It's great that Robyne has such visibility as an anchorperson, because we need more visibility in the art business."

A talk with Robinson about art is dominated by social concerns. "Art education is crucial to the education of our community," she said. "To have a healthy community, we have to understand the world of the artists

who live and work here."

Flatland has acquired grants to help with arts-education projects and acted as a cultural center by hosting receptions for the Minnesota Dance Alliance and for the mayor of Eldoret, Kenya. It has been the venue for poetry readings, wine tastings and private parties. All this in a 640-square-foot boutique space with a painted-over cement floor.

"Robyne is doing things in a real common-sense way," artist Lucker said. "She has exactly the size space that she herself can manage."

Robinson is Flatland. When you walk in, that's not an assistant down on her hands and knees, assembling the new

display table — it's the owner.

Can she run such a gallery and still anchor the nightly news? "It's worked out well," Robinson said. "I close here at 2 p.m. and get to Channel 9 by 2:30. I'm there until 10 p.m. and usually work on gallery paperwork after that."

Robinson likes her Northeast storefront location and hopes the neighborhood will attract galleries that are disappearing from the downtown Warehouse District. "People stop and stare into my display windows like kids looking through the glass at something precious. I'm really pleased to be here."

— Doug Hanson is a Minneapolis freelance writer.

MILK-ED

What: Intensely expressive but repetitive stoneware sculptures by Edith Garcia on the theme of our exploitation by others.

When: Thru Jan. 12.

Where: Flatland Gallery, 208 E. Hennepin Av., Mpls.

Tickets: Free. 612-378-3890.



Star Tribune photo by Jane Hwang

Flatland Gallery owner Robyne Robinson greets neighbor Lynn Bowe, who came by to talk about art and the diversity of the gallery's neighborhood.