



In Marjorie Price's show of new paintings, *THE BATHERS*, at The Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center, Frederick, MD (April, 2010), figures float, turn, dive, and fly in celestial spheres of color and form. Although the title indicates that her subjects are suspended in or reacting to water, they could just as easily be drifting in air. It's about the elements.

Her figures are pared down and flat, bringing to mind the dancing, rhythmic cut-outs of Matisse. Price shares a kinship with the artist, exalting in pure color's ability to bend and shape emotional responses to a work of art.

In *Sea Dreams*, two figures in orange sherbet swimsuits are playfully navigating (or are they hovering) across a current of deep violet that could also be the shore or a stormy sky. The bathers are in turn visited by sea gulls. Not without a dose of dark humor here, it is unclear whether the gulls are poised for a good old dive-bombing or a playful exchange with these figures. However the Fates play out, there is a sense that these bathers, like mythical creatures, are able to hold their own in this unearthly space.



Silhouetted characters in the triptych *Splash*, are repeated in successive pattern across a field of sun-drenched yellow, bringing to mind the figures that adorn ancient Greek vases. The classical world revered perfection and ideal form. In Price's hands, the human form may not be held up as a paragon of architectural purity, but it is articulated with unmistakable delight.

It takes a few moments to recognize the characters in *First Bathers*; the First Family, and also the First African American First Family. Is this a narrative on an Obama return to the Hawaiian waters of his up-bringing, or has she plucked the family out of the political spotlight to revel for a time in buoyant, curative waters, removed from the voyeurism and speculation that goes with the territory? What a generous vision.

There is mystery in her tableaux, in the sense that we cannot get a fixed hold on the limitless backdrops in which the figures dance in free-form catharsis. Peel away layers and one can also sense that Price is exploring the notion that each of us is a solo entity; we imagine that we can intend our course, but we also drift without a direct sense of purpose. As individuals, we sidle up with travelers for a time, but we are ultimately solitary creatures. We are thus grateful that in Price's assessment, the passage that we make into the unknown is upbeat and inviting. Let's all dive in.



Elizabeth Sadoff, art dealer, curator
March, 2010