

## MATTHEW BROWN

### **Katherine Bradford and Sedrick Chisom**

*Angels to Some, Demons to Others*

712 N La Brea Ave

October 8–November 12, 2022

Mark Rothko preferred larger compositions—at a human scale—so that the viewer may be brought into the works, writing that “the artist invites the spectator to take a journey within the realm of the canvas.” Katherine Bradford and Sedrick Chisom absorb and then alter this sentiment by actually placing figures into their colorfields. The two painters thus coalesce at the level of confronting Rothko’s abstractions as landscapes apt for population.

Bradford and Chisom traverse their processes with impeccable care for the content. Where Bradford’s work is borne out of a vital sensitivity, Chisom maps out territories from his research-based speculative fiction. He shares a creative logic with William Blake, producing works that are referential to writings and stories without illustrating their specific narrative events. Everything is tied up in the same world, threaded together with specific details. Some of Chisom’s backdrops recur, such as the abandoned fortress or expansive desertscape. His latest body of work pivots slightly, offering vignettes that the artist has pulled from his database of motifs and aptitude for world-building. Instead of foregrounding the immediate relationship between his paintings, here he emphasizes each painting as a discrete object with its own set of preoccupations.

Ground comes first in Bradford’s compositions - as she initially pursues chromatic atmospheres, then negotiates the population of forms. In doing so, the colorfields operate as stages upon which the figures may be oriented visually and psychologically. Relationships between subjects also emerge in the process of painting. She cultivates the residue of people, resisting the details of her figures so as to produce shapes rather than bodies. Bradford commonly depicts her subjects in bathing suits to avoid any identification with a certain historical period. Other forms of dress follow suit, as she never offers an identifiable style.

Formal outlines are also under consideration in Chisom’s practice, as he largely evades articulated details in favor of material exploration. His characters are constantly fading into silhouettes, rescued by Chisom with the implementation of subtle minutiae. These figures are intrinsic to their contexts, emerging from the fantastical landscapes he endeavors to build. Chisom apprehends modes of authority by reimagining canonical reference points through a science fictional lens. By allowing for the conceptualization of alternative worlds, one is placed at the helm of power, tasked with arbitrating political infrastructures and cultural climates.

Both artist’s palettes consistently feature violets, whether in passing or dominating a composition. Chisom refers to the hue as a “nuclear weapon” within his directory of chroma, emphasizing its potency. His paintings are also oriented around different times of day. Orange compositions express the moment before nightfall when scattered sun rays produce a last burst of brilliance for the day. In *An Altrightland Reconnaissance MapMaker Scaled the Valley of The Rocks Wary of Monstrous People Reportedly Roaming The Savage South*, the viewer greets one of Chisom’s recurring characters as he observes a chasmed landscape at sunset. The figure appraises the scene, cast in shadows and placed atop a rocky earth form. Chisom’s titles become clarification vessels, like captions on trading cards, illuminating the goings-on in his paintings.

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In a complementary image, Bradford's *Last Dive of Summer* sees a minimally rendered figure plunging into water under a glowing solar body. The platform from which this diver leaps appears as though it were accomplished in a single, thick brushstroke. Stepping closer to the canvas, however, yields an awareness that the same expressive brushstrokes used to accomplish the painting's auratic field are reproduced in a deep shade of mulberry and contained within specific bounds to communicate the structure.

Bradford's signature is clear throughout her expansive body of work—rich colorfields populated by briefly described figures, though they extend beyond such brief description. She orbits herself around sentiment, towing longing and memory alongside the production of works. Many figures are made naked by the sheer vulnerability that Bradford paints from. She composes in response to her materials: She gives something to the canvas and receives either pushback or the invitation to continue with her gesture. Her scenes emerge without justification, enraptured in the act of becoming until Bradford achieves her ideal light.

The show's title, *Angels to Some Demons to Others*, underscores the relationship between viewer and composition. Where some might register *Empty Pool* as a depiction of peaceful figures commingling in a pool, there is a spectrality present which becomes mournful when Bradford regards the populace as ghost images of real people. The readability of an image is stationed at the fore here, as the collapse of a singular understanding gives way to myriad assessments. Chisom also examines this pressure point of understanding, noting the potential for doubled readings as his compositions could, on one hand, depict a place of serenity or could otherwise be on the verge of a hellish landscape.

Rothko doubled down on the crisis of interpretation when he declared, "You think my paintings are calm, like windows in some cathedral? You should look again. I'm the most violent of all the American painters. Behind those colors there hides the final cataclysm." What does the viewer bring to a composition? How can paintings give form to an emotional state? These are considerations from which Bradford and Chisom derive enthusiasm. Chisom asserts that each painting is meant to elicit a sense of wonder as he aims to push an enigmatic quality within his practice. Imagination aligns him with Bradford - the two painters maintain their exploration of psychic realms through spectral figures and saturated environs.

— Reilly Davidson

Katherine Bradford (b. 1942, New York) lives and works in New York and Maine.

Her works have been exhibited at The Modern Art Museum Fort Worth, Texas; MoMA PS 1, New York; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Portland Museum of Art, Maine; the Addison Gallery of American Art, Massachusetts; the Weatherspoon Gallery, North Carolina; and the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. She has been honored with an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Her work is in the permanent collections of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New York Public Library; the Wooster Art Museum, Ohio; the Portland Museum of Art, Maine; the Portland Museum of Art, Oregon; Farnsworth Museum, Maine; Smith College Museum, Massachusetts; Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; and the University of Delaware.

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Sedrick Chisom (b. 1989, Philadelphia) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He received a full scholarship to study at Cooper Union, where he completed his BFA in 2016 and was awarded the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation Award for Exceptional Ability. In 2018, he received his MFA from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Twenty Thousand Years of Fire and Snow*, Pilar Corrias, London (2021); *Westward Shrinking Hours*, Condo, in collaboration with Pilar Corrias, London (2020); *When the Night Air Stirs*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2019); *The Final Excursion Into the Savage South*, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (2019); *The Ghost of White Presidents Yet To Come*, ADA Gallery, Richmond (2019); and *You Just Gotta Look For It*, Cooper Union, New York (2018).

Recent group exhibitions include *In the Black Fantastic*, Hayward Gallery, London (2022); *Reference Material*, curated by Brook Hsu, Adler Beatty, New York (2022); *Supermoon*, Clearing, Beverly Hills (2022); *One hundred eighty-six billion steps to the sun*, Clearing, New York (2022); *Dissolving Realms*, curated by Kathy Hessel, Kasmin, New York (2022); *Possédé·e·s*, Montpellier Contemporain, France (2021); *Great Force*, curated by Amber Esseiva, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Richmond (2020); *Cult of the Crimson Queen*, Ceysson & Bénétière, New York (2019); *Beside Myself*, JTT Gallery, New York (2018); *GDPR*, Signal Gallery, New York (2018); and *Leap Century*, Abrons Art Center, New York (2018).

Chisom was awarded the 2018–2019 VCU Fountainhead Fellowship in Painting and Drawing at the Macedonia Institute and was a 2019 resident at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.