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Judy Ledgerwood: "Love, Power, Color" at
Rhona Hoffman Gallery

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Weight of the Catch 2013 Oil and metallic oil on canvas 96"x 80"
Photo: courtesy Rhona Hoffman Gallery

In many ways, Judy Ledgerwood's "Love, Power, Color," the Chicago-based artist's fourth solo exhibition at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, reiterates what viewers have already come to recognize as the artist's signature tropes: repeated circular patterning and an interest in the optical and emotional effects of paint and color. Ledgerwood's patterning of gestural circles is often suggestive of four-petaled flowers or interlocking weft, and over the years this particular mark-making has become a self-referential, formal language rooted in the feminine, the decorative and the domestic--a means by which her paintings can be inherently and consistently at

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odds with the Modernist, Western painting canon. Ledgerwood has often used color to also reinforce the feminine, with vivid pinks and reds a staple in her color vocabulary. Those pinks and reds appear in this exhibition as well, accompanied by an additional premise presented in the exhibition text, which informs us that of late, Ledgerwood's paintings are inspired by a trip to India for the Holi Festival of Colors. Without this prompting, it would likely be difficult for anyone but a colorist like Ledgerwood to identify the Persian Rose, Indian Yellow, and Cinnabar Green in *Weight of the Catch* (2013), and decipher that these specific colors are supplying the works with cultural and historical content. Here, Ledgerwood has introduced a new element into her painting practice: the addition of thick, viscous paint squeezed straight out of the tube. Not only is it another way in which Ledgerwood nods to the seasoned painter--who is often able to identify the specific hues in which paints are manufactured--but it brings a pronounced physicality to the otherwise flat surfaces. In *Crossing Over* (2013), Ledgerwood's painted loops intertwine as if loosely crocheted, the whole network rendered to appear dangling from the upper corners of the canvas, revealing a thin semi circle of gallery-white at the top, as if this 'tapestry' was pulling off from the wall. At the bottom, several loops are executed in the voluminous, squeezed-out paint, its physical weightiness effectively underscoring the illusion. The overall visual precariousness of the imagery painted upon the massive, ubiquitous rectangle of the canvas is indicative of way in which Ledgerwood's *oeuvre* quietly but determinedly works to undermine the rigid, hierarchical history of painting.