



JUDY LEDGERWOOD, *Skylarking*, 2022
Oil on canvas. 84 x 96 inches

JUDY LEDGERWOOD
Sunny Redux

April 26 - June 1, 2024

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is pleased to announce *Sunny Redux*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Judy Ledgerwood, on view from April 26 through June 1, 2024.

Ledgerwood has often employed the signifying aspects of color as a primary factor in her work. The syntax of red, yellow, and blue interspersed with black and white in these paintings recalls the legacy of the Bauhaus, which shares with Ledgerwood a concern for creating a visual literacy through color and eliminating the distinction between fine art and craft without compromising the subjectivity of the viewer. The limited color palette in these paintings shares a vocabulary familiar to any child, and as any child knows – the sun in yellow. The sun is a force that all experience. The title “Sunny Redux” is born from investigating a color palette that is part of a shared experience of color.

With the strength of a specific color palette, the work is groundbreaking and full of subtext. It confronts the viewer with bright colors that establish common ground while unsettling the viewing experience with pattern and texture. Using her familiar visual lexicon of four connecting circles that complete a quatrefoil set within grids of diamonds and/or triangle shapes, Ledgerwood looks to an aesthetic language that she has developed through her painting practice of more than 40 years. Her selected shapes are embedded with meaning relating to gender and myth: “The chevron pattern is said to represent a woman’s opened thighs and readiness for conception. A triangle pointing upward represents a stable foundation rooted to the ground through a solid base. Triangles that point up symbolize male energy. The downward-pointing triangle represents female energy. Quatrefoils look like flowers which makes the shape both problematic and appealing because the shape is so weighted with multiple cultural meanings.”¹

Ledgerwood is notably linked to the Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1970s and 80s and its relationship to traditional female and non-Western art practices, crafts, and mythical symbols. Her focus on these female motifs and ciphers as a repeat vocabulary gives her the foundations to test the medium of paint in depth, thickness, and fluidity. Each painting follows the Modernist structure of the grid which Ledgerwood looks to disrupt through gesture,

¹ Judy Ledgerwood, 2022

materiality of paint, mark-making, and color. The paintings become simultaneously illusion and anti-illusion, where the eye is tricked by the movement of mark to color; a tension arises as space is manipulated through motif and interstice. This continues through her decision to paint around the edges to consume even more of the surrounding space.

To address the expanse of the work both in and outside of the painting brings into focus two other key elements within Ledgerwood's work and practice: space and its relationship to flatness. Her exploration of surface, and its dimensionality through applied paint, allows the paintings to starkly encounter their surroundings. As a body of work, they interact and start to manipulate the relationship between viewer, artwork, and wall space. "...the pattern throughout the field advances. Colors flood off walls, washing over neighboring walls and viewers. One becomes a passive element within an immersive experience that terminates in the isolated experience of viewing an individual work."²

The few elements Ledgerwood employs become significant in addressing an investigation of painting with the ambition to create a vocabulary that resonates across different social and cultural spheres. Ledgerwood heralds color as the conduit. Its cohesive functions open a door for equity in viewing but also pose challenges in subjective opinion. We all have our own unique viewership and understanding of what it means.

"When it rains, it rains on everyone; for the sun it's the same."

- Judy Ledgerwood

Judy Ledgerwood (b. Indiana, 1959) is a painter whose canvases and wall painting installations confront the history of abstract painting with traditions in the decorative arts. Her work is included in the public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Milwaukee Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland, among others. Ledgerwood is a recipient of awards from The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, Artadia, The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, and The Illinois Arts Council. Other commissions include a monumental site-specific painting for the Embassy of the United States in Vientiane, Laos (2015), and in 2018 Ledgerwood became the first Chicago-based artist to create an installation for the Art Institute of Chicago's Bluhm Family Terrace. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, and is Professor Emeritus, Art Theory and Practice, at Northwestern University.

² Philip Vanderhyden, 'Who's Afraid of Flowers?', from *Judy Ledgerwood*, ed. Christa Herausgeber and Wolfgang Häusler, (Hatje Cantz, 2009) p. 139.