

Jessie Homer French

Chernobyl

April 21 - May 23, 2020

For five decades, self-taught artist Jessie Homer French (b. 1940, New York, NY) has been painting sardonic yet transcendent scenes of nature's ongoing encounter with humankind. From her High Desert studio in California, French's practice is also a process of coping with personal loss, grasping the effects of climate change on the landscape, as well as reflecting on the untameable beauty of the outdoors through a unique mix of awe and dark humor.

On April 26, 1986, there was a 10-day Plutonium core meltdown at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant outside Pripjat, now the ghost region of Northern Ukraine. It left behind the largest and most catastrophic nuclear event in history. With 350,000 people permanently evacuated outside the "exclusion zone" due to the high levels of radiation, it was believed that centuries would elapse before the decimated environment could heal, let alone sustain wildlife.

Yet 30 years later, Chernobyl is a thriving ecosystem of bears, bison, wolves, lynxes, horses, and deer, a contemporary Garden of Eden. In this zone of human abandonment, a web of life exists as it did for millions of years before the Anthropocene and will again thereafter. It is precisely these types of didactic inflection points that fascinate French and are so earnestly translated into her paintings that take on special meaning in our current times.

Jessie Homer French (b. 1940, New York, NY, lives and works in Mountain Center, CA) is a self-taught, self-proclaimed "regional narrative painter" who routinely, perhaps even obsessively, paints archetypes of death, nature and rural life. She has held solo exhibitions including Mother's Tankstation, Dublin, IE and London, UK; Art Basel Hong Kong, CN; Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA; the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA; Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica, CA; Winchester Gallery, Victoria, BC; and Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Homer French has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Various Small Fires, Los Angeles in 2020. Her work has also been included in group exhibitions at institutions such as the Palm Springs Museum, CA; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA; and at Samuel Freeman Gallery, Santa Monica, CA. French's work is included in the permanent collection of the Palm Spring Art Musuem and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.