MASSIMODECARLO

Jessie Homer French
Fire, Water, Time
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Jessie Homer French calls herself a regional painter. Self-taught, she has spent more than five decades painting what is around her, turning it into calm, flat, carefully patterned paintings in which something is always happening beneath the surface. Her home has changed over the years, from Los Angeles to Vancouver Island, the California desert and now Ojai, but her way of working has not: she stays with the land she lives in and, through it, tells the larger story of our time.

The paintings presented at MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique move from lakeshores to a desert plain, from a forest in flames to a small-town post office. These are places she knows well, and she paints them with real affection. But in her work, beauty always sits next to something fragile. Wildfires, changing waters, quiet places under pressure: the calamities she paints happen here, in a specific valley or on a specific shore, and yet none of them stays local. What happens on one lake in California is happening, in other forms, almost everywhere.

Often she splits the picture in two, showing the world above the water and the world beneath it with the same clarity. In *Threadfin Shad Lake Casitas*, a cloud of tiny silver fish scatters across the waterline, caught between two bass waiting below and a heron and an egret watching from the reeds. Nothing dramatic happens: it is simply the food chain at work, calm and inevitable. A passionate fly-fisher since the 1970s, Homer French knows these waters from the inside.

Fire is one of her great subjects. She first painted it in the early 1980s, after watching a controlled burn and finding it beautiful, and she still sees it as something that both destroys and renews. In *The Burning Pine Tree*, a single pine glows from within, its last green tufts holding on at the top. In another canvas, a line from the prophet Malachi runs beneath a burning forest: a day that shall burn as an oven, leaving neither root nor branch. Written thousands of years ago, it now reads like a forecast.

Against all this burning stands something that has quietly endured. At first sight, *King Clone Coyote* shows a plain stretch of Mojave Desert dotted with creosote bushes, where a coyote slips between the branches and looks back at us. But the title tells another story. King Clone is a ring of creosote near Lucerne Valley, California, grown from a single seed around 11,700 years ago, as the last Ice Age was ending, and counted among the oldest living things on Earth. It has survived by renewing itself, as the old centre dies and new stems keep growing outward from that first plant, slowly widening into a ring. In its own slow way, it does what fire does in her paintings: something ends, so that something else can begin.

"I come at it sideways," the artist says of the issues that matter to her. She does not preach; she paints the world as it is, here and everywhere, where life and death have always belonged to each other. In her calm, clear pictures, nothing is hidden and nothing is dramatised. Things burn, things are eaten, things endure, and all of it is part of the same story.

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Jessie Homer French

Jessie Homer French was born in New York in 1940. She currently lives and works in Oak View, California.

A self-taught artist, her paintings emerge from a continuous analysis of places surrounding her and reveal the artist's personal and profound attitude to a local and transient type of composition. Through a simplified language – only apparently naive, flat colours and calm brushstrokes – Homer French treats with delicate care existential issues related to death, nature and rural life. In her work, humanity appears a toxic intruder in a melancholic nature, and yet, even the paintings with the darkest subjects feature a formal vitality capable of giving extraordinary immediacy to her bittersweet and anti-pastoral compositions, in which creation and destruction coexist with exemplary candour.

Homer French's work is included in the collections of the Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Artwork

Jessie Homer French
Threadfin Shad Lake Casitas, 2025
Oil on canvas
66 × 91.5 cm / 26 × 36 inches

Jessie Homer French
The Burning Pine Tree, 2026
Oil on canvas
91.5 × 61 cm / 36 × 24 inches

Jessie Homer French
Mount Hood and Lost Lake, Oregon, 2025
Oil on canvas
61 × 91.5 cm / 24 × 36 inches

Jessie Homer French
Los Alamos, California, 2025
Oil on canvas
66 × 91.5 cm / 26 × 36 inches

Jessie Homer French
Lake Casitas, California, 2026
Oil on canvas
66 × 101.6 cm / 26 × 40 inches

Jessie Homer French
King Klone Coyote, 2026
Oil on canvas
91.5 × 91.5 cm / 36 × 36 inches

Jessie Homer French
For, Behold the day cometh, 2026
Oil on canvas
50.8 × 127 cm / 20 × 50 inches