



**For Immediate Release**



Jessie Homer French, *Blowout*, 2020. Photo by Timothy Schenck.

## **Kicking Off Climate Week, Painter Jessie Homer French Inaugurates New High Line – Moynihan Connector Billboard with Two Urgent Artworks**

**New York, NY (September 18, 2023)** — Timed to Climate Week NYC, the annual leadership summit for global climate action, the High Line has newly installed two urgent artworks by painter Jessie Homer French at one of the most highly trafficked locations in New York City. For the thousands daily crossing the newly opened High Line – Moynihan Connector bridges and surrounding sidewalks, as well as those passing through the Lincoln Tunnel, the striking imagery of French’s artworks offer a pressing reminder of the threats human action poses to the natural environment, wildlife, and ourselves.

“We are thrilled to present Jessie Homer French’s potent artwork for the debut of this unique new canvas for High Line Art,” said Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art. “French is unrivaled in her ability to convey the beauty of the natural world and the peril it faces, and her paintings poignantly illustrate the imperative message of Climate Week—that we must act now to protect our planet for future generations.”

For the High Line – Moynihan Connector Billboard, French presents two reproduced paintings, *Noah’s Ark in the Coachella Valley* (2016) and *Blowout* (2020), on view through December 2023.



Both works serve as urgent calls for climate justice, highlighting the impact of humans on the environment.

"I've always admired how the High Line creates an unlikely green space in the heart of New York" says French. "I hope that my work in this setting invites conversation about our relationship to the natural world."

*Noah's Ark in the Coachella Valley* reimagines the flood narrative in the Old Testament, in which God chooses to eliminate all life—other than Noah, his family, and two of every animal—as punishment for corruption and violence on earth. In French's version, Noah and his family are notably absent, and the flora and fauna on the ark are specific to the artist's beloved California desert: a roadrunner races across the roof, a desert bighorn sheep peeks out onto the deck, and a fringe-toed lizard balances precariously on the hull. The artist adopts this narrative as an allegory for what is to come, highlighting the uncertainty of humanity's place on earth.

In *Blowout*, she depicts a blazing oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The scene is reminiscent of the tragic 2010 blowout on BP's Deepwater Horizon, which claimed 12 lives and later caused the largest marine oil spill in history. French, a devout fly-fisher, painstakingly paints the various species of fish surrounding the rig's steel framework. She captures a sense of naive calm amongst the playfully large sea life, all seemingly unaware that their ecosystem may soon be thoroughly destroyed.

Both *Noah's Ark in the Coachella Valley* and *Blowout* are devoid of humans, and yet humankind's presence is overtly implied through the devastating results of their attempts to control and interfere with nature. Reproduced here on both sides of a billboard in one of the highest trafficked areas of New York City, Jessie Homer French's warnings loom large.

French creates paintings that document the diverse ecosystems native to her home in Southern California—deserts, forests, and oceans—as these sites are confronted with, and play host to, death, destruction, and ecological disaster. Recognized late in life by the art establishment, the 83-year-old self-taught artist has nonetheless maintained a consistent recurring visual language over her 50-year career. French compresses three-dimensional space into crisp fields of color, delineated with line work that suggests the ripple of a wave or the separation between sea and sky. Her paintings consist of a single plane in which foreground and background become one, undermining our understanding of scale and perspective, and eschewing any sense of traditional hierarchy. Piercing what might otherwise read as flattened, folk-art versions of the American sublime, the artist depicts forest fires, oil rig explosions, and fish die-offs, among other recognizable symbols of environmental disaster.

This presentation of French's works marks the debut of the High Line – Moynihan Connector Billboard, situated on Dyer Avenue between 30th and 31st Streets. Changing every few months, the billboard will showcase artworks by some of today's most extraordinary artists, including those working in painting, drawing, and photography, adding to the depth and diversity of artists and mediums featured on the High Line. The billboard connects passersby and the cultural landscape of the Chelsea neighborhood with the world-class art program found atop the High Line.

Just as with the High Line, the billboard is a quintessential example of urban reuse, two of the

few remaining structures of Chelsea's industrial past. The billboard's visibility expands the audience for High Line Art beyond park visitors, providing a catalyst for conversations that extend beyond the footprint of the High Line, connecting the park, street-level traffic, and the wider neighborhood.

### **ABOUT JESSIE HOMER FRENCH**

Jessie Homer French (b. 1940, New York) lives and works in Mountain Center, California. She has held solo exhibitions at Massimo De Carlo, London, UK; Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, Dallas, Texas, and Seoul, South Korea; Mother's Tankstation, Dublin and London; the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, California; Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica, California; Winchester Gallery, Victoria, British Columbia; and Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles. Her work has also been included in group exhibitions at Francois Ghebaly, Los Angeles; CLEARING, New York; the Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, California; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California; and Samuel Freeman Gallery, Santa Monica, California. French's work is included in the permanent collection of the Dallas Museum of Art, Palm Springs Art Museum, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She was included in the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022.

### **ABOUT HIGH LINE ART**

Founded in 2009, High Line Art commissions and produces a wide array of artworks on the High Line, including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Led by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and presented by the High Line, the art program invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the unique architecture, history, and design of the park, and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

For further information on High Line Art, please visit [thehighline.org/art](https://thehighline.org/art).

### **ABOUT THE HIGH LINE**

The High Line is both a nonprofit organization and a public park on the West Side of Manhattan. Through our work with communities on and off the High Line, we're devoted to reimagining public spaces to create connected, healthy neighborhoods and cities.

Built on a historic, elevated rail line, the High Line was always intended to be more than a park. You can walk through the gardens, view art, experience a performance, enjoy food or beverage, or connect with friends and neighbors—all while enjoying a unique perspective of New York City.

Nearly 100% of our annual budget comes through donations. The High Line is owned by the City of New York and we operate under a license agreement with NYC Parks.

For more information, visit [thehighline.org](https://thehighline.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).

### **SUPPORT**

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Artwork images courtesy of the artist, MASSIMODECARLO, and Various Small Fires.

**@HighLineNYC @HighLineArtNYC #JessieHomerFrench**

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