

Text for the press

Cornelia Hesse-Honegger, scientific artist born 1944 in Zürich Switzerland, was trained and von Tschernobylworked for 25 years as a scientific illustrator. She works at the interface between art and science. Her watercolours are highly regarded for their beauty as well as their critical message and are exhibited in museums and galleries internationally. In the 1970s she painted insects and spiders. At that time she became fascinated by leaf bugs, the Heteroptera. At first, she collected leaf bugs around her house in Gockhausen near Zurich where she lived with her husband and two sons. Initially she became sensitized to man made' deformities on insects by being asked to paint mutated lab flies (Drosophilidae) in 1967 for her professor in the Zoology Department of the University of Zürich. In 1985 she continued to paint the 'man made' deformities that she was finding in mutated flies that had been in the laboratory.

In summer 1987, just one year after the catastrophe at Chernobyl, Hesse-Honegger collected leaf bugs in fallout areas of the Chernobyl radioactive cloud in Sweden and the south of Switzerland. In 1988 she continued her search for deformed leaf bugs in the environs of Swiss nuclear power plants, and extended this work to areas close to European nuclear power plants and reprocessing plants, including Chernobyl, as well as to contaminated areas in the USA. Her publications created considerable controversy in the media. Scientists reacted with scepticism if not outright hostility towards her findings. In the following years, popular interest in the 'nuclear threat' diminished but she continued with her research, making 'manmade destruction in nature' visible by painting disturbed leaf bugs, and making protocols, maps, and books.

Field study in the environs of Swiss nuclear power plants

Tree bug from Gugele Canton Aargau, Switzerland

Watercolor, Zürich 2000

The right wing is disturbed



Field study in the environs of the nuclear power plant Gundremmingen in Germany
Squash bug from Limbach, near the nuclear power plant Gundremmingen,
Germany
Watercolor, Zürich 2003
Left part of the head and left feeler are deformed

