

About the Cover Artist

No Reservations The Art of Gail Bruce

By Karin Lazarus, BFA

The art world triumphed when Gail Bruce chose a different path for herself. Had Bruce taken the road chosen for her, she would be working away at a nine-to-five job, and we would have been deprived of her colorful, witty paintings in the whimsical style she has made her own. Bruce's own personality illuminates her work, and each piece maintains a purity of form and nature.

Clean and Simple, yet Bold

Bruce's style, inspired by Grandma Moses, has been the same since she first picked up a brush. "Clean, simple lines; bold, flat color," she says. "Even my home is like that. I can draw, but I'm not great at it. I start out with a photograph; I've collected hundreds, and I use them as references for my work." She was encouraged by her father, who told her "to be successful, give it a hundred percent; if you don't like it, stop immediately and do something else."

Bruce was born Gail Hire in Chicago in 1941 and was raised in California. But at the age of 18, she moved to New York City, slipping into city life without missing a beat. Although she began painting at age eight, her passion for art didn't take hold until she was in her late twenties.

From Model to Artist

Throughout the 1960s, Bruce worked first as a runway model for Coco Chanel in Paris and for Diana Vreeland. Stunning images of her, photographed by Irving Penn, graced the pages of *Vogue* magazine. Her radiant beauty was also seen in *Elle*, *Seventeen*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Glamour* magazines. She was soon discovered by the director Howard Hawks and acted in films and television series for the next few years.

Standing on the brink of becoming a permanent part of the Hollywood scene, "I came to realize I wasn't happy with the lifestyle, it wasn't my cup of tea and I immediately gave it up," she says. Confident, positive, and decisive, Bruce is a woman who is unafraid

This issue's cover features Bruce's 2009 30" x 20" acrylic on canvas painting *Remembering Grandfather*. To view more of Gail's work, visit her website at <http://www.gail-bruce.com>. To see what she and Murray have created, go to <http://www.ramscale.com>.



to take risks. She wanted to add new dimensions to her world. Writing music, penning a lecture series for *Glamour*, styling, casting, and producing for film and television are some of the ways she has channeled her boundless creativity.

In 1969, while doing pre-production work in California, she met Murray Bruce, a commercial film director. She decided to pack up and move to New York to work with him as a stylist at his commercial production company, Phos-cine. In 1970, Gail and Murray married and have been together ever since. By 1974, Phos-cine had closed its doors, and the couple opened Ramscale, their New York City location facility for film, production, art shows, and events. In 1985, Gail became president of the company, but she always somehow stayed connected to her art.

For Gail Bruce, there is no meaning to life without a spiritual component. Painting provides harmony and keeps her focused on her life, and she believes that is what spirituality is about. She knew when it was the time to pick up her paintbrush. In 1970 she enrolled in the Arts Student League in New York, where she took up serigraphy, a form of stenciling that is used to create the limited edition reproductions of her original acrylic paintings on canvas. An art agent in New York quickly picked her up and represented her for 10 years.

In the early 1980s, the same spirituality that moved her to paint began stirring up new thoughts. A Chumash Indian elder was one of her artistic influences and was a great motivation for her to become an activist for Native American causes. "I had a calling to give

Do you know of a senior artist (age 65 or older) whose work or life reflects the rich experience of today's seniors? If so, we'd like to hear about them. Email us at journaleditor@csa.us.

back, make an effort, to do something good for the Native American community and was blessed when the opportunity to help build the American Indian College Fund [<http://www.collegefund.org>] came along," she says. "I have proudly served on the board for over twenty years."


Unreservedly Focused

Sparked perhaps by her own Native American heritage, Bruce's work with Native Americans is about legacy. She is also the creator and founder of the Cultural Learning Centers Initiative for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, which has built learning centers at 29 American Indian Tribal Colleges in 12 states. She also serves on the Multicultural Audience Development Initiative for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and is a cofounder of Bee Native, which strengthens the honeybee population, tribal communities, and the environment.

Bruce's work as co-founder of Ramscale Productions has given her experience that brings a refreshingly clear-sighted business sense to both her artistic and Native American education activist work. Her current brainchild is the latest chapter in a remarkably productive and creative career: the not-for-profit UNRESERVED American Indian Fashion and Art Alliance (<http://www.unreservedalliance.org>) is devoted to celebrating and leveraging American Indian fashion and art.

"In the early eighties, as I was helping to found the American Indian College Fund, I realized that ninety percent of Native American artists and designers didn't know how to bring their art work to the market place," Bruce says. "They didn't know about licensing, trademarks, and marketing. With an incredibly generous \$400,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Michael Chapman — one of the country's leading authorities on both corporate and foundation fundraising — and I established UNRESERVED American Indian Fashion and Art Alliance to create internships for Indian artists in the fashion and art industries."

UNRESERVED will be presenting the first American Indian Art show in New York City in November 2009 and the first American Indian presence during Fashion Week in February 2010. Bruce has turned her edgy eye toward Indian artists and the way the outside world views them. She provides a fresh glimpse into Native American culture and a fashion show with political content.

Bruce divides her time between New York City, Massachusetts, and Tortola, British Virgin Islands. She has one daughter, Dakota, and two grandchildren, Tyler and Parker. 



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