

Charles Frace

Tucked away in the hills of eastern Pennsylvania are rolling sanctuaries of wilderness rich in animal life and ancient Indian lore. It was into this world that Charles Fracè was born in 1926. His family made their home in a small mining town then known as East Mauch Chunk (Indian for Bear Mountain), but young Charles found a different kind of home in the wooded hills nearby. Though his hometown has since changed its name to Jim Thorpe, Fracè's boyhood fascination with the outdoors has remained intact.

Charles began drawing at age five, transforming his discoveries on Bear Mountain into further explorations in his sketchbook. He remembers, even at that early age, wanting to be nothing other than an artist. He taught himself to paint at fifteen, and his self-instructed talent eventually earned him a scholarship to Philadelphia's Museum School of Art (now the Philadelphia College of Art), from which he graduated with honors.

In 1952 Fracè launched his professional career as a freelance illustrator in New York City. Dominated by names like Rockwell, the New York publishing world welcomed an unknown artist from Bear Mountain with less than open arms. But Fracè was following a path set forth by his lifelong dream. His first few years were filled with struggle, but eventually his talent and determination were recognized and rewarded by some of the nation's best known publishers of books and magazines. Despite his growing success, however, he grew frustrated by illustrating ideas conceived by others and not himself.

In 1962 a friend, photographer Shelley Grossman, suggested that Fracè take a break from art and come along as his assistant on a wildlife photo assignment in Florida. Together they spent three months at the bird and wildlife sanctuary of the late John Hamlet, one of the world's most respected naturalists. Fracè helped catch, train and handle large birds of prey and other animals, soaking up Hamlet's wisdom and nature's wonders. The experience fostered a dramatic reawakening of his boyhood love for animals and left him with an insatiable appetite for more.

When he departed Hamlet's world to return to his own, Fracè vowed to the naturalist that he would rededicate himself and his art to becoming a wildlife artist and would strive to be one of the best in all the world.

Fracè returned to his New York flat with a pair of Hamlet's birds of prey and a single-minded determination to bring other animals to life in his art. Fracè's reborn passion and intensity caught the attention of wildlife author Roger Caras and a wide range of nature publishers. In the wildlife arena, Fracè was awarded greater freedom in conceiving and executing his assignments, and he soon became one of the nation's most sought-after illustrators of animals.

The tremendous demand, however, began to exhaust Fracè's stamina and cloud his mind with worrisome deadlines. As he had done years earlier when his work seemed stale, Fracè laid down his brush and sought respite. But rather than escape to Florida, Fracè found peace in his own studio, painting canvases for his own pleasure. He finished only one, which his wife Elke showed to a nearby art gallery to ask what the owners thought of it. They insisted on displaying the painting in the gallery, and it sold that very afternoon.

Encouraged by this initial response, Fracè spent his evenings working on more paintings for the gallery, while still devoting his days to illustration assignments. The immediate sale of each canvas fueled Fracè's confidence, pushing him ever closer to making the biggest decision of his life.

It was in 1973, after the issue of Fracè's first limited edition print, that he finally was able to make the permanent change from illustrator to fine artist. All 3,000 prints of his *African Lion* were sold out upon release, duplicated by the immediate sell-out of his second edition, *Tiger*. Wood Hannah, then the artist's publisher and a leading figure in the limited edition print field, remarked that never had he seen such sudden, massive collector acceptance of an artist's prints.

For a decade and a half since, the sell-out of every Fracè limited edition has unequivocally demonstrated collectors' unwavering respect and admiration for his talent. Over 25 years after promising John Hamlet that he would strive for nothing less than greatness, Fracè has remained true to his word. Today he continues to strive to be worthy of that unforgotten pledge to the man whose world reshaped his own. Much of the appeal of Charles Fracè's art is rooted in the artist himself. One can sense an almost spiritual bond he shares with his animal subjects. Accompanying Fracè on a recent field study, geneticist Dr. Michael Bleyman observed, "Charles almost walks and moves just like a big cat."

Fracè brings to his art over a quarter century of personal research and close kinship with animals. A cat or bird in a Fracè painting is not merely one particular animal, but the culmination of all those he has seen and known, infused by all the experiences he has shared with them.

Fracè's field research has taken him to Africa, South America, Alaska and wilderness areas across North America. Even his pleasure trips are to sites where he can soak up the nature around him—such as a mountain hike in Glacier National Park—to make new discoveries. He finds fascination in all of nature's creatures, whether a stately lion or a common possum.

In his studio, Fracè works ten hours a day, laboring as hard with a painting's composition as he does with his brush. The painting's design reflects a relationship between the animal and its habitat, shaping the mood. Fracè then builds depth and refines detail to bring the canvas to life. His disciplined technique and determined nature permit no shortcuts. Despite the waiting list of interested purchasers, his painstaking method allows him to complete only five or six paintings a year.

While Fracè's mastery of design and technique captivates art collectors, his flawless precision intrigues nature experts. Jack Hanna, director of Ohio's Columbus Zoo, says, "He knows his subjects so well. Every feather, every curvature, every habitat is so correct. Some term Fracè's art 'perfectionism' because it unites the ultimate in composition, technique and scientific accuracy."

Having been featured in over 300 one-man shows throughout the country, Fracè each year spends several weeks appearing at exhibits and keeping in close touch with his collectors. He has been honored by a number of museum shows including the Denver Museum of Natural History, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, and Cumberland Museum and Science Center, and a special Silver Jubilee exhibit of 25 originals in Atlanta in 1987.

When his annual show season is over, the artist returns to his Tennessee home to his wife of 24 years, Elke, and sons Jeffrey, 20, and Roger, 17. A favorite pastime is studying the works of the old masters and visiting special exhibits such as a recent showing of Vincent Van Gogh in New York City.

Today, as always, Charles Fracè's goal is to strive to be even better, to push each next painting a step further. Though his painting has been called "perfectionism," Fracè believes true perfection lies beyond any artist's grasp, beckoning to the artist to drive himself harder and closer in its elusive direction. Rather than look back at his quarter century of accomplishments, his thoughts are focused on what the next 25 years might bring.

The future holds a deep concern for Fracè in regard to the many endangered species of the world. To further their survival, he has donated original works as well as limited edition prints to such groups as International Fund for Animal Welfare, Friends of the Sea Otter, the Zoos of Columbus, Ohio and Metro Dade, Florida, Bill Wickerson Speech and Hearing Center, Canada's Royal Ontario Museum and others. In 1987 the artist established the Fracè Fund for Wildlife Preservation, a foundation which awards grants to wildlife organizations.

It has been said that, a hundred years from now, much of the wildlife and many of the settings Fracè paints may well have vanished—and that his work will stand as a permanent, authoritative record of these animals and their environment. It is Fracè's hope that his art might also serve to prolong their existence by bringing people closer to the awesome-but fragile-beauty of nature.

Fracè's many honors and awards include: Who's Who in American Art, Men of Achievement, Men and Women of Distinction, Dictionary of International Biography, The International Who's Who of Intellectuals, Contemporary Personages, Personalities of the South, Directory of Distinguished Americans, The American Registry Series, Division of the American Cultural Arts and Who's Who in the South and Southwest.

Copyright Notice: This document was generated on [ArtRev.com](https://www.artrev.com) on 6/24/2021 6:29:18 PM (U.S. Eastern Time Zone) - Copyright 2021 ArtRev.com, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The entire contents of this brochure is the property of ArtRev.com and/or its content suppliers. You may not modify, copy, reproduce, republish, or distribute any portion of this brochure without the prior express written consent of ArtRev.com, Inc.

Authenticity & Price Match Guarantee: Shop with confidence. ArtRev.com is proud to be the first online art retailer to offer a "[lifetime authenticity guarantee](#)" with every limited edition or original work of art. Most limited edition and original artworks ship with a Certificate of Authenticity free of charge. This certificate is an official and valuable document that most insurance companies require in order to insure artworks against damage or theft. ArtRev.com will make every possible attempt to match or beat the advertised price of any major Internet competitor, art gallery, or frame shop; given that they are authorized to sell the item from the publisher or artist, and have the exact item in stock available for immediate sale.

Disclaimer: The biography shown in this brochure is not meant to be a complete and comprehensive exploration of the life of the featured artist and is not guaranteed to be up-to-date. While information provided about each artist is carefully studied and reviewed prior to publishing; ArtRev.com assumes no liability for the content provided on this page. Biography Last Updated on 5/22/2009 3:47:29 PM. Please [let us know](#) if any information is out-of-date or inaccurate.