

**SPOTLIGHT: C.S. Price**  
**Title of Piece: Wolves**



El Presenter: Gayle del Grosso

Date: April 15, 2008

Title of Piece: Wolves

Year created: 1944

Artist: C.S. Price

The five most essential aspects of this work of art:

1. Nature-based spirituality; wolves are free and wild with a striking sense of spirit. Price often spoke of a spirit, the one big thing he called it which he believed unified all experience. His final paintings are experiences or realizations of some aspect of this unifying spirit for Price and for the viewer.
2. Style is semi-abstract.
3. Wholeness of presentation is composed of both color and application.
4. The bold, dark colors coupled with the bold, textured paint strokes give a feeling of intensity.

Dark and white eyes stare out giving the sense they are alive and focused on the viewer.

5. The mood of the painting is dark, making it appear scary. There are merging forms (two wolves) that reflect a unifying spirit.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What do you see? How many wolves? Real or not real? (Good time to talk about semiabstraction).
2. What colors did the artist use? Why do you think he chose these dark, intense colors? (Captures wild nature of wolves).
3. What is the mood or how does this painting of wolves make you feel? Why? (Talk about how color selection can create mood/emotional response).
4. What was the painter trying to convey to the viewers?
5. How do you think Price felt when he painted this?

Tour Type: Artful Animals, Learning to Look

About the artist:

Clayton S Price, modernist Western painter, illustrator and muralist, born in Indiana in 1874 and died in Portland in 1950. When he was 12, he moved to a ranch in northern Wyoming and spent his boyhood riding horses and tending cattle. He kept a sketchbook in his saddlebag recording the appearance of cattle and horses while passing many hours moving through the vast spaces of the range. These early experiences were to influence what he naturally put on canvas when he started painting. He worked as cowhand and ranchman until about 1918.

In 1905, when he was 31, a wealthy cattleman gave Price an opportunity to go to St. Louis School of Fine Arts for a year. This was his only formal art training. While there he painted the subjects he knew best - - cattle, horses, and the western riders on the plains. After school he continued to work as rancher and illustrator in WY and across the Canadian border. With his intimate experience of life on the range Price illustrated stories of the great West for magazines. Price spent 1909-10 in Portland as illustrator for Pacific Monthly. In 1915, he saw the modern paintings in the Pan-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and in 1918 he began devoting himself to serious painting.

He moved to Monterey CA in 1920, and it was there in the 20s that he found his own voice as a painter. He had been moving away from realism toward abstract expressionism struggling to understand modernism.

Price discovered Cezanne, the post-impressionist and a simplified type of cubism. He came upon the realization that form is an experience, not a shape and that color can create structure, not simply show the effect of light.

He started working heavily his canvases with layers of paint and his forms seem almost sculpted, often with a palette knife that blends and breaks his colors. His images are usually large and powerful expressions of nature. Horses and landscapes were common themes.

In 1929, he returned to Portland and in the mid-30s Price's interest shifted from expressive painting to the use of the medium of paint to articulate ideas. Images became symbols or metaphors for ideas that he believed express the essence behind appearances, e.g. "The Fisherman", suggestive of Christ, the loneliness of the seeker. The human soul in the fragile craft of mortal life.

