



It is the coldest picture I've ever seen. An arctic wolf is howling in a whiteout blizzard. The wolf's head is raised, its ears laid back. You can tell by the ruffled fur that a keen wind is hitting the wolf from the left side. The snow has that weird wispy quality that it only gets during bitterly cold weather.

Lee Kroemschroder's "Howling Wind" stands out among wolf paintings I've seen as the image that best captures the harshness of a wolf's struggle for survival. Wolves lead difficult, dangerous and strenuous lives. "The Howling" is brutally honest about what it is like to be a wolf.

If this painting is too frigid for your den wall, you might prefer Carl Brenders' "Den Mother." An adult wolf lies with six half-grown pups, several of which are "monkeyballed" on top of her back leg. The pups have been rendered with care so that each has

its unique identity. The painting is perfectly realistic, yet it conveys the bonds of love that wolves have toward their pups. I can't imagine any fan of wolves looking at this painting without smiling.

Whatever your tastes might be, today there are many superb paintings of wolves to choose from. And that is a relatively new fact. Thirty years ago there was hardly any market for wildlife art. For various reasons, including the unease many people felt with non-representational modern art, art galleries began selling paintings and limited-edition prints that featured wildlife. In recent decades wildlife art has been one of the liveliest sectors of the art world.

Wolves began to appear in wildlife art in the mid-1980s, according to Robert Koenke, the publisher of *Wildlife Art News*. That period roughly coincides with the great fight to restore wolves to Yellowstone, a battle that both created and reflected a new public tolerance for wolves. Wolves became one of the most frequently painted animals and now rank as one of the five most popular subjects, according to Koenke.

Wolf pictures can be divided into three groups. Least expensive are the wolf posters that usually (but not always) feature photographic images. Many posters cost about \$10. Posters are the type of art people might put up on a rec room wall with pins. At the opposite end of the economic scale are original paintings that sell for thousands of dollars, sometimes many thousands of dollars.

Between those extremes lies the large and fascinating market of limited-edition prints, and that will be the focus of this article. Since relatively few people can afford to buy original paintings by established artists, limited-edition prints are attractive to wolf fans who want to grace their homes or offices with the beauty and magic of wolves.

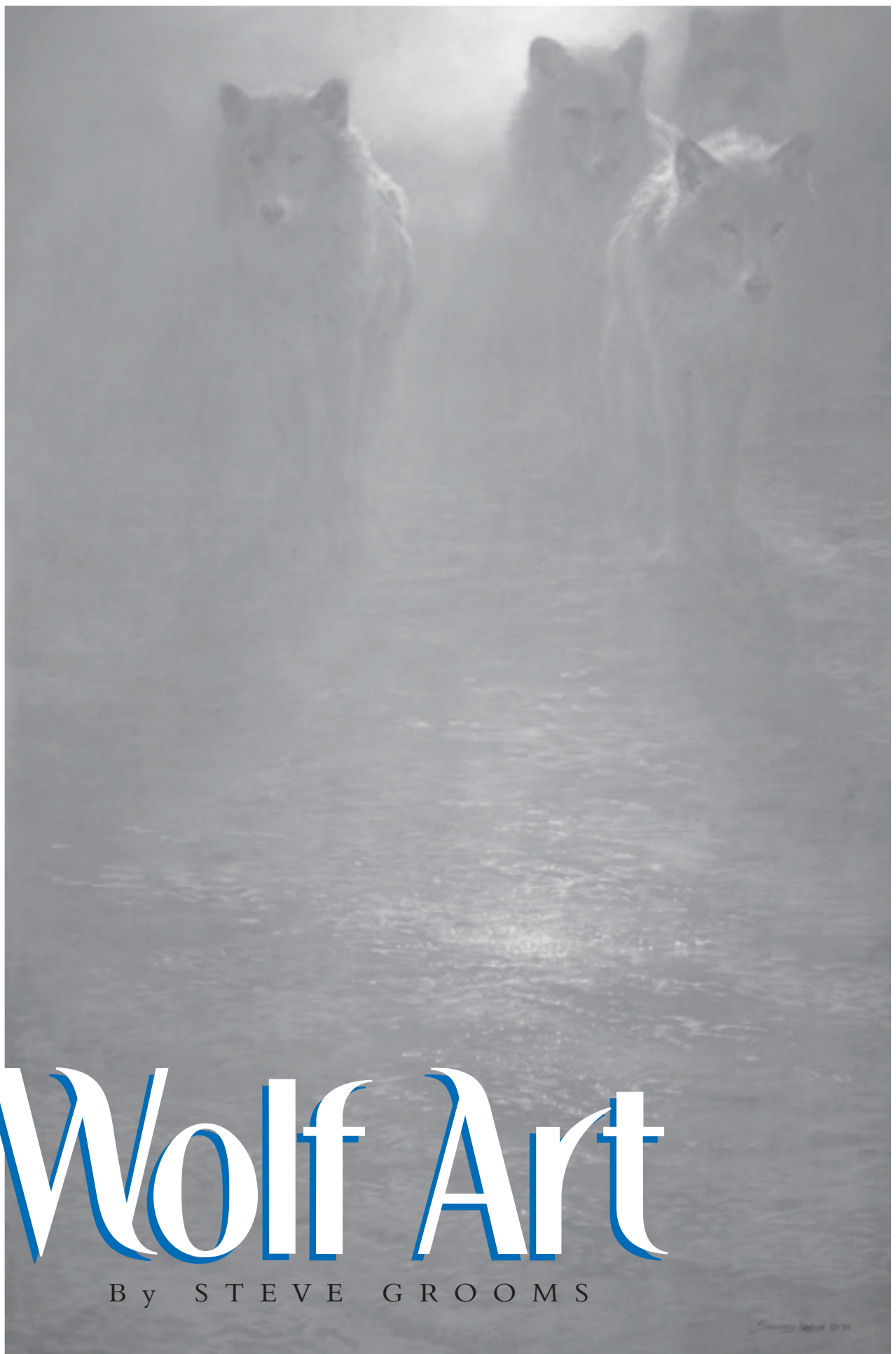
Prints are not prohibitively expensive. Limited-edition prints typically sell in the range of \$150 to



"Howling Wind"
©Lee Kroemschroder

Artwork courtesy of Lee Kroemschroder and Wild Wings, Inc.

Welcome to the World of



Wolf Art

By STEVE GROOMS

*Frozen
Moonlight*
©John Seerey-
Lester

Artwork courtesy of
the artists and art
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Mill Pond Press,
Venice, FL 34292

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\$220. Prints look most attractive when expertly matted and framed. A good frame shop will charge about \$200 to mat a print of average size. The size of the print dramatically affects the cost of matting and framing. In total, most limited-edition prints cost about \$400 to \$500 after matting and framing.

Because limited-edition prints are limited, the popular ones sell out and become valuable. Art dealers and galleries often stockpile prints they expect to sell out. When the print is sold out or in low supply, those reserved prints can still be bought, but they will be more expensive.

“Silent Witness,” by renowned artist Robert Bateman, falls in this category. This moody picture features a Canadian Shield environment in winter. Two massive blocks of lichen-encrusted granite dominate the foreground. The watchful wolf is halfway obscured by a granite block. This is exactly the way we so often see wolves, standing with dignity but caution, only partially in view.

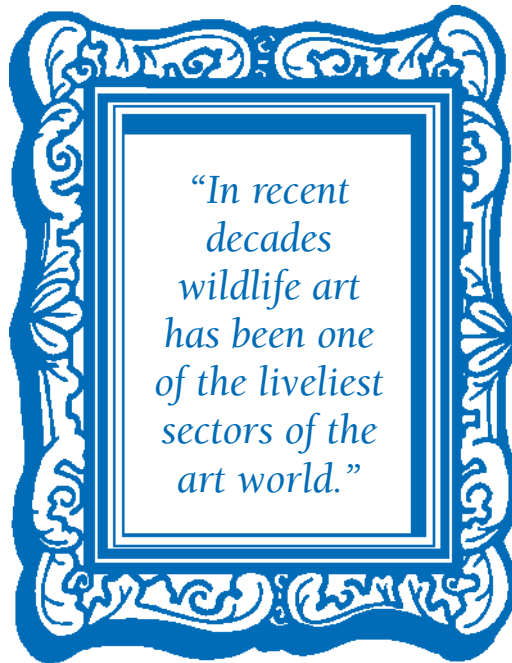
How can you find the wolf art that would please you most? The simplest way is to look at many paintings until you find an image that stirs your heart. But a few observations about the different wolf art styles might help define your tastes.

When wolves first appeared in wildlife art, the fashion was to make them highly colorful and distinct from their surroundings. Artists emphasized the rich browns present in the pelts of many wolves, heightening that effect by bathing the scenes in golden sunlight.

As the wildlife art market has matured, the trend has been toward more somber, naturalistic paintings. The popularity of this more somber and natural art style owes much to Robert Bateman. The wolves in Bateman’s paintings blend so perfectly

with their environment that you might need to look hard to see them. Similarly, John Seerey-Lester’s “Frozen Moonlight” depicts three wonderfully spooky and indistinct wolves in dim blue light.

Wolf art can also be placed on a continuum running from the extremely romantic to the extremely realistic. Artists like Bateman, Seerey-Lester, Carl Brenders and Dan Smith



(cover art) paint in the muted tones of the highly realistic art. But many wolf fans love the spirit, symbolism and romance of wolves. Romantic paintings might combine the image of a wolf with that of a Native American or show a wolf pack howling with a display of northern lights blazing behind them.

And, of course, many paintings fall in between the extremes of realism and romanticism. No single style is “right” or “better” than any other. To my eye, most painted wolves are plumper and more contented looking than the wild wolves I’ve seen. But that’s just my taste. If you like a wolf painting, it is the right one for you.

There are three good ways to buy a limited-edition print.

The traditional way is to visit a wildlife art gallery to examine what they have in stock or listed in catalogs. These galleries are popular enough that many wolf fans will find one—or perhaps several—nearby.

The newest way to shop for wolf art is via the Internet. Just direct a search engine to find “wolf paintings,” and it will come up with many hundred hits. Two Internet galleries featuring wolf art are the Birchwood Gallery (www.birch.mb.ca) and World Wide Art (www.world-wide-art.com). Both galleries let you play with various combinations of prints, mats and frames on your monitor until you find the most attractive combination. Then you can order the print along with framing and matting for one low price.

The most enjoyable way to buy wolf art is to visit a wildlife art show. Wildlife artists attend such shows because they love to chat with people who share their passion for wildlife and art. By visiting an art show you can come home with a print and a great story about how it came to be created. These shows are advertised in magazines like *Wildlife Art News*.

Two of my friends make a point of collecting the work of artists who have supported wolf restoration. Because so many wildlife artists have been generous in their support of wolves, there are too many names to try to list them here. Any great painting of wolves can bring its owner joy. The pleasure of owning a really special wolf painting is all the sweeter if you know the artist has personally contributed to the welfare of wolves. ■

Steve Grooms is a writer living in Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA who recently revised his book, The Return of the Wolf.

Silent Witness ©Robert Bateman

Artwork courtesy of the artists and art print publisher Mill Pond Press, Venice, FL 34292. For additional information, call 800-535-0331.



Which Wolf, Which Background?

Because there are so many paintings of wolves on the market today, you can choose one that matches your ideal vision of wolves.

For example, many people now have observed wolves at Yellowstone Park. There are wolf paintings that specifically

use Yellowstone's beauty as the backdrop. John Banovich's handsome "The Return" is an example. John Seerey-Lester has at least one Yellowstone painting.

Many artists have painted arctic wolves well. Among them are Al Agnew, Carl Brenders, Robert Bateman and John Seerey-Lester.

Some artists have painted wolves in Alaskan or Canadian settings.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is to find red wolf art. For current information, contact the Aubrey White at the Red Wolf Coalition, Box 2318, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948-2318.

*Purchase beautiful
wildlife art and
support the survival
of wolves.
Check out our new
web art gallery at
www.wolf.org.*