

*The body of a bird is not just a prodigiously complicated machine ... if you randomly shook up the parts over and over again, never in a million years would they fall into the right shape to fly like a swallow, soar like a vulture, or ride the oceanic up-draughts like a wandering albatross, Richard Dawkins, 2011*

*After the Deluge* & *Flotilla* are two of Ray Ching's finest paintings, excellent examples of the compositional mastery with which the artist has conceived and realised both works. There is a grace and deftness in the arrangement of the gloriously diverse grouping of birds in *After the Deluge*. Ching's technical brilliance is evident: a brilliance which he has applied to the rendering of hundreds of avian narratives over the years, earning him a place in the canon of New Zealand and International art.

Take a moment to consider how this text's opening quote offers an alternative perspective from which to consider these works.

For the evolutionary scientist, such as Dawkins, or anyone involved in ornithology, Ching's works are of immense value insofar as they bear rich and vital witness to our ecological narrative: they serve a documentary function, offering insight beyond what we are capable of perceiving with the naked eye.

A significant milestone in the artist's early career occurred in 1966 when his work was noticed by the ornithologist Sir William Collins (of Collins publishing): a meeting led to Ching illustrating *Readers Digest Book of British Birds*. This New Zealand born, British based artist occupies a unique space in both the art world and the zoological community. For Ching, the feat of immersing himself in these two traditionally-distinct spheres has resulted in remarkable international success. His body of work is of documentary and cultural value to both communities and consistently acquired by collectors worldwide.