

*Through the weeks that I have worked, on and off, on the drawing for this painting, a lot of different species were drawn in, taken out, moved up or over or down, fitted in front of this bird or behind that one, until the great raft of birds that I wanted to see would finally float past. The completed drawings shows something of the struggle, stuck and glued together as it is from as many sheets of paper, but finally with the chosen birds doing what I wanted of them.*

*I wanted to see if I could make the body of beautiful birds just float by, occupying the whole picture as they pass. It seemed important that this be an unrelated group - a gathering of species, exactly and precisely rendered certainly - but with no scientific connection and no ordinary reason to be together. The Black Voted Penguin is from waters off southern Africa, the King Penguin from Antarctica, the Tufted Duck, Eiders and Mallards from Europe, the Ruddy Duck and Wood Duck from North America, the South American Black-Necked Swan, the Mandarin from Asia and lastly the Black Swan and Dusky Moorhen from Australia. There was a Great-Crested Grebe above the top-right Mallard, but only the splash remains, as it dives to escape the snapping attentions of the swan.*

*That these birds wouldn't naturally be together doesn't mean they can't be or won't ever be - we change the balance of our world, not always for the better. I felt the things would work best only if each of the birds was so convincingly painted that you would have to believe they were here, together, and that because they were so very beautiful, you would want to believe it. At nearly four feet square, the panel allows for the birds to be shown not life-size, but large enough to make their presence strongly felt. There are fifteen birds in the final composition which, together make a bold enough arrangements of shapes and colours, for the painting to dominate most other work standing around and about it in the studio during its production.*

*Voice from the Wilderness, Raymond Harris-Ching, Saint Publishing 1994*