

Belonging to the same incendiary body of work as *A Terrible Event Over the Mallee*, this captivating painting on linen offers a useful starting point from which to consider Ray Ching's distinctive handling of realism.

Paintings from the early decades of the artist's career, when much of his work served a primarily documentary function, belie a scientific precision and almost-microscopic quality. Ching carried this incisiveness and painstaking attention to photographic realism into his work of later years: works such as *Red Tailed Black Cockatoos*. Here the cockatoos have been painted with that same beautiful clarity of detail and linear finesse. Interestingly, through the manipulation of atmospheric conditions there has been a blurred, impressionistic lens applied to the scene.

This affords a depth to the work, a challenging and poetic quality which facilitates our engagement with the painting on an even more profound, reflective level.

Aesthetic considerations aside, this work also goes to the very roots of a message of ecological preservation. Ching celebrates and affirms the beauty and preciousness of avian wildlife. An appreciation of these works encourages us to value and preserve the lives and habitats of these creatures.