

Ron Kingswood



BOLD • LARGE • LAYERED • MINIMALIST

The Wildlife Art of Ron Kingswood

Jonathan Cooper



fig. 1

Gyrfalcon 1982

acrylic on masonite

36 × 48 ins / 91.4 × 121.9 cm

BOLD • LARGE • LAYERED • MINIMALIST

The Wildlife Art of Ron Kingswood

by David J. Wagner, Ph.D.

You could say that Ron Kingswood is a wildlife artist. But I would say, only to a certain degree. Some of his work barely pictures wildlife and some not at all. Were one to skim through a catalogue raisonné of his paintings, one would see a body of work characterized by stylistic periods shaped by nineteenth- and twentieth-century art movements, structured by compositional layers with an evolving ecology and environmental ideology, in grand scale.

Kingswood's early professional work, through 1985, had a strong affinity to that of his elder, countryman Robert Bateman (such as *Gyrfalcon*, fig. 1), which is understandable given Kingswood's predisposition to nature as a young man, and Bateman's artistic dominance in Canada and the U.S. During Kingswood's middle years, from 1986 to 2015 or so, he drew upon art history lessons he had learned as a student at H.B. Beal Art in London, Ontario, which he visually integrated with wildlife ecology and environmental ideology. This resulted in several series of work influenced first by

Impressionists including Cézanne and Monet (e.g., *Out of the Dimness They Sounded*, fig. 2), then Post-Impressionists particularly Matisse (*Deer in Orchard*, fig. 3), and German Expressionists such as those in the group, *Der Blau Reiter* (*Dusk with Deer*, fig. 4), and Abstract Expressionists and Minimalists from Mondrian to de Kooning, Motherwell, and Rothko (e.g., *Pick Pocket*, fig. 5, and *Takken in het bos*, fig. 6 and *Snow Buntings*, fig. 7), all of which, it is safe to say, has rarely had much influence on painters of wildlife art with the exception of a few such as Robert Bateman.

In the New Millennium, Kingswood reduced the degree to which wildlife subject matter visually dominated his paintings (e.g., *Pick Pocket*, *Takken in het bos*, *Snow Buntings*), focusing instead on bold composition of ecology resulting in a dominate sense of place and increasingly, environmental ideology such as his ardent stance against industrial clear cutting of forests. More recently, the artist has been layering his painted environments with wildlife

right, fig. 2

**Out of the Dimness
They Sounded** 1998

oil on canvas
54 × 95 ins
137.1 × 241.3 cm



fig. 3

**Deer in
Orchard** 1990

oil on canvas
54 × 30 ins
137.1 × 76.2 cm

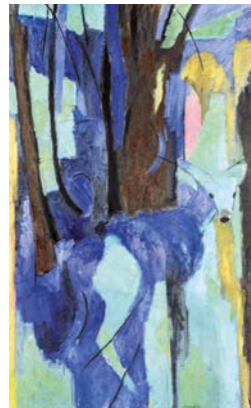


fig. 4

Dusk with Deer 1992

oil and charcoal
on canvas
70 × 42.5 ins
177.8 × 107.9 cm

images. And this postmodern, blending of historic styles and content is what viewers predominantly see in Ron Kingswood's artistic output today (e.g., *Northern Vigil*, *Gyrfalcons*, p.11).

Ron Kingswood was born and raised in Southwest Ontario midway between Toronto and Detroit along Canada's Lake Erie shore which is about 60 miles north of the U.S. His father raised him with an understanding of hunting and sportsmanship: "I recall most Saturdays during the fall hunting season traveling with my Father to the country to meet my uncles where we would wander woodlots and meadows hunting pheasants, rabbits and ducks." It wasn't long before young Ron, began to draw and paint his quarry. This interest let him to a serious study of nature through magazines such as Audubon which featured illustrations by Don Richard Eckelberry (1921-2001) and, Canadian, J. Fenwick Lansdowne (1937-2008), both of whom Kingswood wrote to solicit advice, and both of whom replied. "They were



left, fig. 5

Pick Pocket 2013

oil, graphite, oil stick on canvas
84 × 104 ins / 213.3 × 264.1 cm

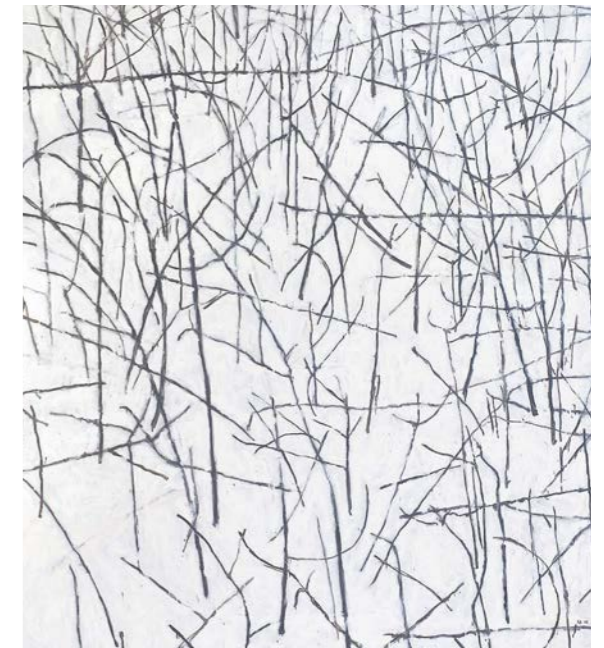
below, fig. 6

**Takken in het bos
(Forest Succession)** 2005

oil on canvas
100 × 90 ins / 254 × 228.6 cm

the first to inspire me as a very young bird painter." "Years later, during my honeymoon, we visited Eckelberry in Babylon, on Long Island, New York, and often since." (Author's note: Eckelberry was widely revered during his lifetime by North American wildlife artists. His willingness to mentor Kingswood was generous, but not all that unusual. In the world of wildlife art, a number of old masters mentored younger artists over the years, notably Louis Agassiz Fuertes, whose protégé, George Miksch Sutton, published their correspondence in a book entitled, "To a Young Bird Artist.")

In 1978, The Lynwood Art Centre in Simcoe, Ontario, held a Robert Bateman exhibition. Kingswood made the one-hour drive to see the show in person with his older brother. Bateman was a teacher in Burlington, Ontario, at the time, an hour further east. The experience obviously motivated Kingswood. In 1979, he enrolled at H.B. Beal Art (school) in London, Ontario, to formally study art, and it was



there that he discovered art history: “When I finished the program, I realized what had excited me there the most was art history.” “I plunged head first into reading any book I could find; first the Impressionists then the rest followed as art history unfolded before my very eyes.”

“Among highlights, were Cezanne, who taught me that everything in a painting needed the same care and handling whether trees, figures or buildings. This was not what I was seeing in the wildlife art world where the animal was the focus and background was very much secondary, with the exception of Bateman. Then I studied the great Matisse, who was a huge sway for me. Matisse was in his early 40’s (to my great amazement) when he started to think independently, removing himself from tradition, and starting to develop his own vision, perspective and insights on painting. . . . I also studied the life of the great sculptor, Brancusi, who was a student of Rodin. To establish himself, Brancusi said that he needed to leave the studio of Rodin, because he felt that he would be forever in the shadow of the great tree. So somewhere in my 40’s, after seeing and reading plenty about the world of modern art and the world of animal art, I (realized I) needed to heed what Matisse and Brancusi said many years before.”

In his reminiscences about his art and career, Kingswood is quick to recognize his wife, Linda, for all that she has done to help him establish his career.

David J. Wagner, Ph.D.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin is the author of *American Wildlife Art* (american-wildlife-art.com). He is also President and Chief Curator of a company (davidjwagnerllc.com) that produces traveling museum exhibitions. Among its recent exhibitions is *Environmental Impact*, which toured to eleven venues coast-to-coast in the United States, and featured *Clear Cut*, 2003, oil on canvas, 60 × 54 ins, and *Takken in het bos* (*Forest Succession*) 2005, oil on canvas, 100 × 90 ins, by Ron Kingswood.



fig. 7

Snow Buntings 2002

oil on canvas

110 × 88 ins / 279.4 × 223.5 cm

END NOTE:

Quotes and biographical details for this article were provided by phone and email from the artist to the author between October, 2015 and February, 2016.

“We at the National Museum of Wildlife Art have long admired the work of Ron Kingswood. His experimentation with abstraction not only allows us to talk about different art movements, but also about different ways of interpreting nature. We have an enormous canvas of his called *Mink Tracks, Canada Geese* that is mostly Kingswood’s depiction of snow. In the lower left corner, cut off on the edge of the canvas, is a group of geese. In the upper right corner is a small patch of open stream and a few carefully placed dark circles (the mink tracks). I like to tell people that it is a very large painting of a very small patch of land. Furthermore, it is something you might see right outside our front door on the National Elk Refuge; it just depends on where and how you look. Kingswood’s work helps us broaden visitors’ expectations of what they will see when they enter our galleries and hopefully broadens their idea of what wildlife art can be.”

Adam Duncan Harris, Ph.D.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Petersen Curator of Art and Research
National Museum of Wildlife Art of the United States

“Ron Kingswood defies convention, he challenges rigid established boundaries, he pokes a paintbrush into the eyes of the status quo and declares that those who celebrate nature in their art can do better. Throughout art history, irreverence has been the amniotic fluid for new exciting art movements to be born. Ron isn’t an iconoclast because he doesn’t care what people think; he is who he is and does what he does because he cares deeply about the plight of the natural world in the 21st century and his fabulous paintings are coming off the easel to wake us up. . . . Kingswood is using fine art to advance a harmonic fusion between the aesthetics of fine art, composition, form and color with a message that there’s so much depth, so much happening within the realm of natural beauty that we need to make visible. In many ways, he is nonpareil and he is only just getting started. Kingswood is avant garde and that’s a very good place to be.”

Todd Wilkinson

Bozeman, Montana. Environmental journalist, longtime American writer about wildlife art, and author of the recent critically acclaimed books, “Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek, an Intimate Portrait of 399, the Most Famous Bear of Greater Yellowstone” and “Last Stand: Ted Turner’s Quest to Save a Troubled Planet”. Wilkinson wrote a major review of Environmental Impact, a traveling museum exhibition produced by David J. Wagner, L.L.C., which included the work of Ron Kingswood, for Sculpture Review Magazine which is published by The National Sculpture Society.

Exhibition

*“Do not wish to be anything
but what you are, and be
that perfectly”*

– St Francis de Sales

**Northern Vigil
Gyrfalcons**

oil on canvas
50 × 44 ins
127 × 111.8 cm



The Quest

oil on canvas
38 × 44 ins
96.5 × 111.8 cm





Feast Day

oil on canvas
60 × 48 ins
152.4 × 121.9 cm

left:

Feast Day
(detail)





Squall

oil on canvas
24 x 12 ins
61 x 30.5 cm



Cock Crow

oil on canvas
24 x 12 ins
61 x 30.5 cm



Red-Legged Partridge

oil on canvas
34 × 38 ins
86.4 × 96.5 cm



Morning Light

oil on canvas
13 × 12 ins
33 × 30.5 cm



Grey Ghost

oil on canvas
14 × 18 ins
35.6 × 45.7 cm



Marsh

oil on board
11 × 14 ins
27.9 × 35.6 cm



Late Light

oil on board
12 × 16 ins
30.5 × 40.6 cm



right:

Hungarians

oil on canvas
38 × 40 ins
96.5 × 101.6 cm

left:

Hungarians

(detail)





left:

Companions
(detail)



Companions

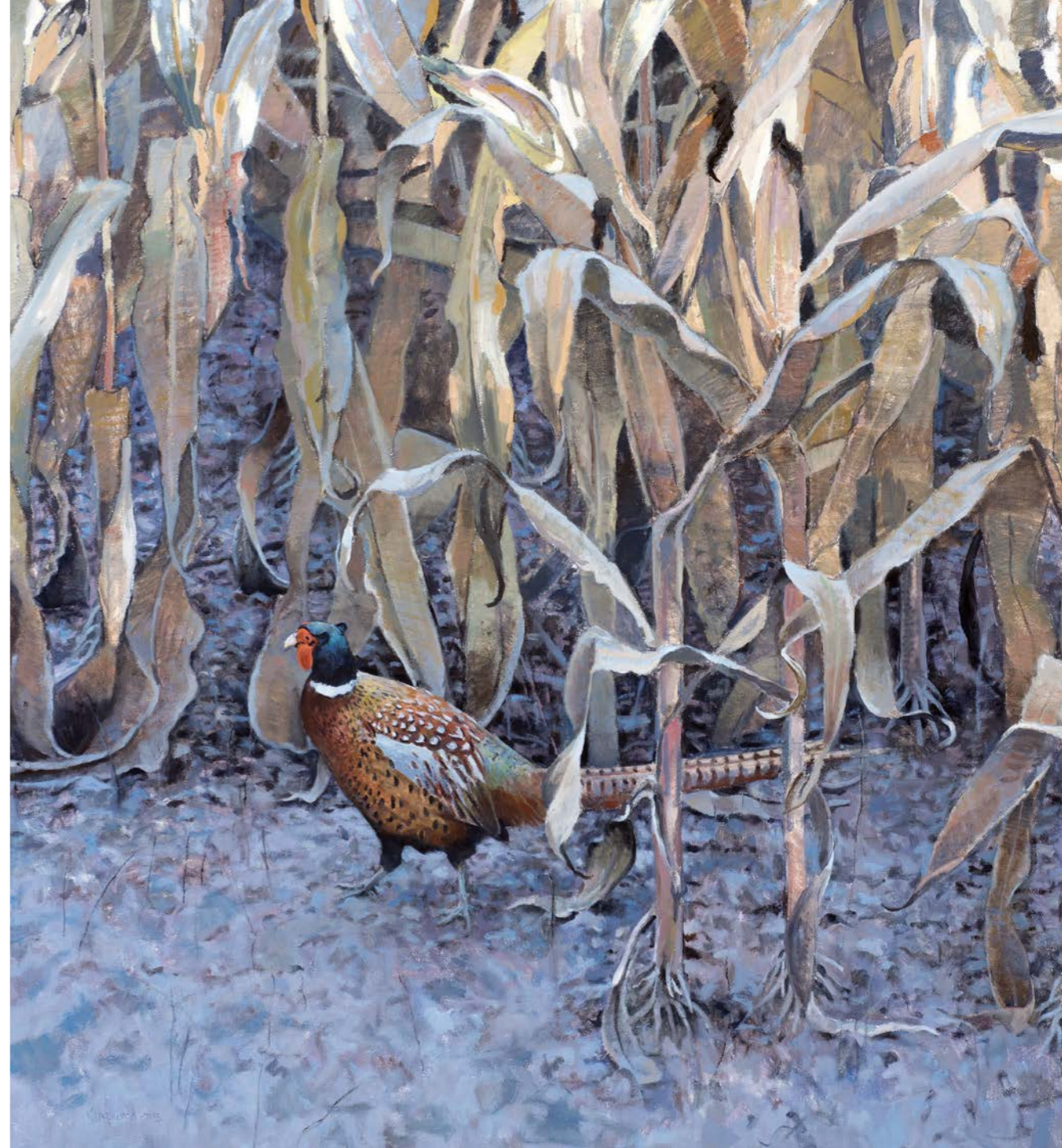
oil on canvas
24 × 24 ins
61 × 61 cm

*"I'm not fearful of painting the
common landscape, what I am
fearful of is not being able to
paint it in an unfamiliar way"*

– Ron Kingswood

Pheasant

oil on canvas
60 × 54 ins
152.4 × 137.2 cm



Young Ducks with Iris

oil on canvas
36 × 32 ins
91.4 × 81.3 cm





right:

The Gleaners II

oil on canvas
40 × 45 ins
101.6 × 114.3 cm

left:

The Gleaners II

(detail)



Hunting the Marsh

oil on canvas
28 × 28 ins
71.1 × 71.1 cm



Kingswood 2016



left:

Arrival

oil on board
11 × 14 ins
27.9 × 35.6 cm



right:

Parentage

oil on canvas
30 × 36 ins
76.2 × 91.4 cm

RON KINGSWOOD

Born 1959, St. Thomas, Ontario

Lives in Sparta, Ontario

Education

H.B. Beal Art, London, Ontario

University of Western Ontario, Bird Ecology and Ornithology

Solo Exhibitions

2016	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK	2008	20th Anniversary Exhibition, Jonathan Cooper, London, UK
2014	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK		
2012	Odon Wagner Contemporary, Toronto		Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, Wyoming
2010	St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas, Ontario		The Bank Job, London, Ontario
2006	Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico		Sandra Ainsley Gallery, Toronto
2005	Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, Wyoming	2007	Loveland Museum, Loveland, Colorado
2002	Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico		Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, Wyoming
2001	Marin-Harris Gallery, Jackson Hole, Wyoming	2006	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK
			Foothills Art Centre, Golden, Colorado Gallery 1261, Denver, Colorado
		2005	Scott White Contemporary Art, Telluride, Colorado
			Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta
		2004	Off the Path, Jackson Street Gallery, Jackson Hole, Wyoming
		2003	Canada House Gallery, Banff, Alberta
		2002	Spring Exhibit, Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta & Vancouver, British Columbia
		1999	Crossing Paths, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
			American Miniatures, Settler's West Gallery, Tucson, Arizona
		1998	Spanierman Gallery, NY
2009	Drawing/Not Drawing, J. Cacciola Gallery, NY		
	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK		

Group Exhibitions

2014 -16	Masterpiece London, 2015, London, UK		
	Bada Antiques & Fine Art Fair, London, UK		
2015 -16	Palm Beach Jewelry, Art & Antique Show		
2015	Contemporary Naturalism, Gerald Peters Gallery, NM		
2014	Simpson Gallagher Gallery - 20th Anniversary, Cody, WY		
2013	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK		
2012	Bealart100, St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre, Ontario		
	Particles + Waves, 12 Contemporary Artists, ILLAD Contemporary, NY		
	Beautiful Calamity, Hollis Heichemer, Ron Kingswood, Ellen Wagener, J. Cacciola Gallery, NY		
	Drawing/Not Drawing, J. Cacciola Gallery, NY		
	Jonathan Cooper, London, UK		

Museum Exhibitions

2015	<i>Birds in Art</i> , Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI		St. John, Newfoundland
	<i>Western Visions</i> , National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY		National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, Wyoming
			St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas, Ontario
			The Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Charlottesville, Virginia
			Whitney Western Art Museum, Cody, Wyoming
2014-15	<i>Environmental Impact Exhibition</i> (Touring) organised by David Wagner:		
	Canton Museum of Art, OH; The R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, LA; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI; Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, NY; Erie Art Museum, Erie, PA; Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA; Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet, SC; The Art Museum, SUNY Potsdam, Potsdam, NY		
2005	<i>Wildlife Art of the New Century II</i> , National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY		
2000 -04	<i>Western Visions Miniature Show</i> , National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, Wyoming		
2000	<i>The Single Tree</i> , Museum London, London, Ontario		
1998 -01	<i>Wilderness Reunion</i> , Algonquin Museum, Ontario		
1998	<i>80 Years of Experiment 1912-1992</i> , Beal Art, Museum, London, Ontario		
1996	<i>Wildlife, the Artist's View</i> , Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin		
1992 -93	<i>Southwestern Art Exhibit</i> , Museum London, London, Ontario		
1989	<i>Southwestern Art Exhibit</i> , Museum London, London, Ontario		

Museum Collections

Ella Sharp Museum of Art, Jackson, Michigan
Foothills Art Center, Golden, Colorado
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin
London Museum, London, Ontario
The Museum of Newfoundland & Labrador,

Selected Collections

Husky Injection Molding Systems, Bolton, Ontario
Morgan Stanley, Tokyo, Japan
Seroyal, Toronto, Ontario
Weston Foundation, Toronto
World Wildlife Fund, Gland, Switzerland
York Finch General Hospital, Toronto
Bird Studies Canada, Port Rowan, Ontario

Commissions

Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Official Portrait of the Honourable Steve Peters, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario

front cover:

Grey Ghost (detail)

oil on canvas
14 × 18 ins
35.6 × 45.7 cm

inside front cover:

Red-Legged Partridge (detail)

oil on canvas
34 × 38 ins
86.4 × 96.5 cm

opposite:

Late Light (detail)

oil on board
12 × 16 ins
30.5 × 40.6 cm

back cover:

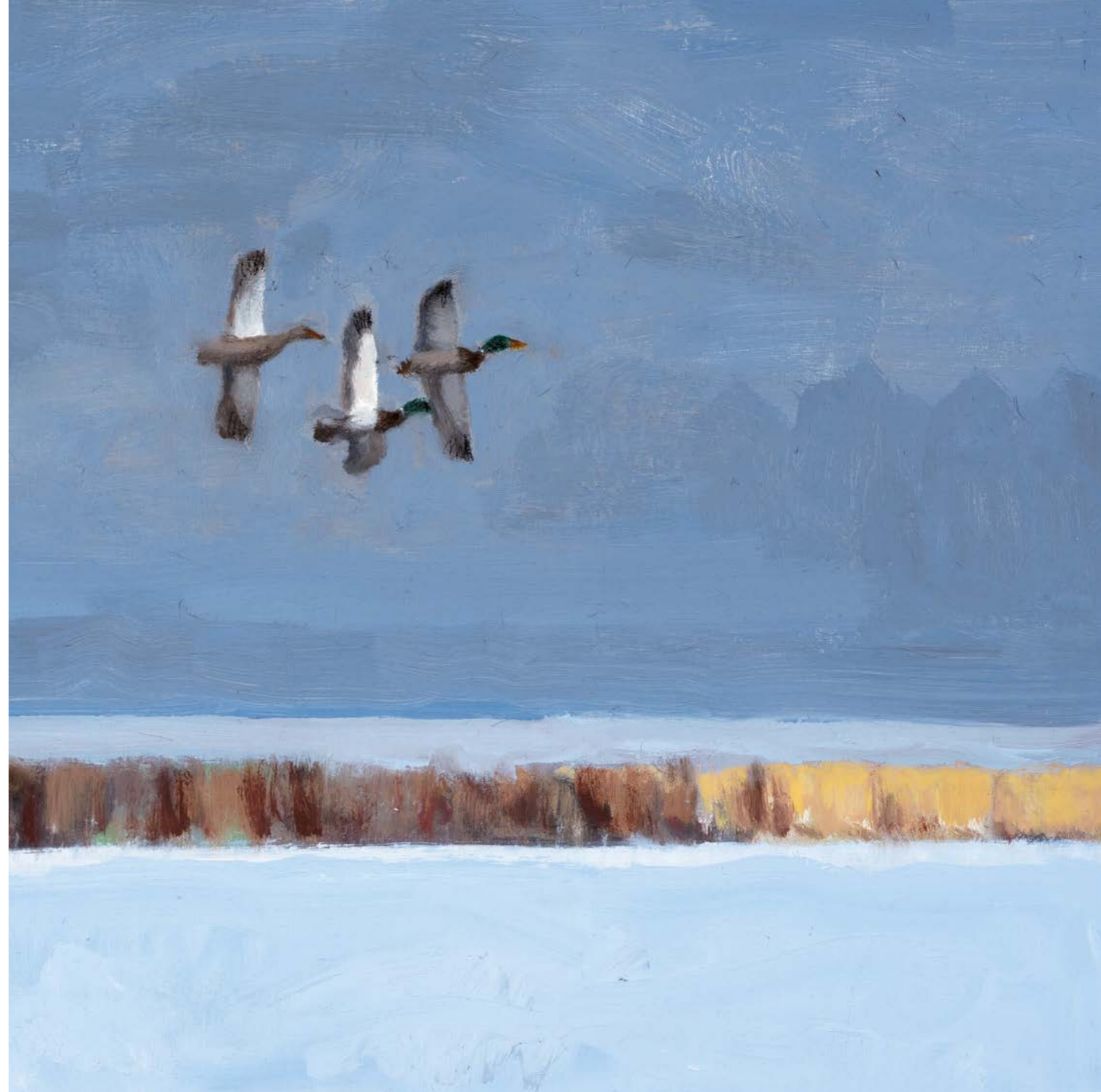
Evening – Eagle Owl

oil on board
14 × 11 ins
35.6 × 27.9 cm

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Text, p.8 © Todd Wilkinson
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Jonathan Cooper

20 Park Walk London SW10 0AQ
t: +44 (0)20 7351 0410
mail@jonathancooper.co.uk
jonathancooper.co.uk





Jonathan Cooper