



MEDIA RELEASE

Drawn to the wild

Paintings of New Zealand Birds

NICOLAS DILLON

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Celebrated artist Grahame Sydney encourages wildlife painter to create book

Nicolas Dillon is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's leading wildlife painters. Having honed his craft and established an international reputation over some 30 years, Dillon's long-held dream was to publish a book and take his work to a wider audience.

Encouraged by Grahame Sydney and with a desire to share the story of his artistic process, Dillon created ***Drawn to the Wild: Paintings of New Zealand Birds***. Here, we can appreciate Dillon's field work alongside his intricate studio paintings; by writing about and describing the experience of his practice, we share his world view.

Celebrated for his majestic portraits of our native birds – from terns and dotterels to ducks and kea, Dillon's exquisitely conceived drawings and painting demonstrate a sensitive, keen eye for the avian world. Growing up on a farm in Marlborough brought him into close contact with our wildlife; a bucolic childhood which strengthened his lifelong connection to the natural world.

Dillon's love of birds was sparked by a defining and dramatic moment when he was about four or five years old and a shining cuckoo thumped into the window and landed in the garden outside. Something stirred in him that day – the need for artistic expression; to capture the life force of birds – and has been with him ever since.

Motivated by a deep yearning to connect with something beyond what he sees and captivated by colour, form and tone, Dillon says, "Through birds, I come closest to the soul of the environment. By observing and painting the visible realities, I encounter the invisible and, for me, the distance between humans and nature is lessened."

Drawing in the field and spending hours observing birds lies at the heart of Dillon's practice. His reference material comes from working with a high-powered spotting scope and then, drawing and painting directly into a sketchbook. Those precious moments in nature are fundamental to his knowledge of birds and the environment and inspire not only his work but his life.

Drawn to the Wild is a remarkable tribute to our native birds and one which captures an artist in the moment, at the height of his powers.

