

Ron Kingswood  
Becoming Pastoral

Ron Kingswood  
Becoming Pastoral

## Foreword

I consider Ron Kingswood to be a major International wildlife artist, and that abstraction plays an important part in his picture making today. His earlier pure abstract work derives from this observation of nature and played an important part in the making of an artist I represent and have great respect for.

Jonathan Cooper  
Jonathan Cooper Gallery  
London, UK



Ron Kingswood

## Becoming Pastoral

There is often an assumption that a career will proceed in a relatively linear fashion. In the arts specifically, it is commonly assumed that one will develop a style in a certain genre and over time mature and refine that style. It has not been common to see artists make radical departures from what they've been known for and veer off in completely new directions, particularly if they've enjoyed success in those areas.

In modern painting one can think of Philip Guston making such a move when he abandoned his abstract practice for the cartoonish paintings he produced from the 1960s on. Not surprisingly, these works were initially misunderstood and met with disappointment, anger and confusion by his peers and the public.

One sees an echo of Guston's departure in this exhibition of abstract paintings by Ron Kingswood. Those encountering the exhibition with no knowledge of Kingswood's previous work could assume this to be the work of a lifelong abstract painter. But for those who knew the work Kingswood made prior to these, here is a profound departure.

Like Guston, the desire to continue to make the paintings that Kingswood had done up until to 2005 had been lost. Although very well received, the work no longer provided the challenge nor the satisfaction that was needed from them, and his serious misgivings about the state and limits of wildlife painting had also come to the surface. He felt a need to change and had the mettle to do so.

The painting, *The Birth of the Oceans*, at first glance seems out of place amongst the rest of the exhibition. Calm, minimal, and with paint applied in a manner viewers had come to expect, it is out of step with the anxious marks and assertive paint handling of the other paintings. With time though it becomes clear that these *Ocean* paintings had marked a transition point for Kingswood.

These *Ocean* works, and certainly the ones that came after them, did not so much represent a complete break with the past but instead a rapid evolution in the work. One might argue that Kingswood was always an abstract painter in sheep's clothing. When looking at many of his earlier works, one often had to seek and locate the animal subject of the work in the vastness of his fields and

lakes, works that without their subject would have made fine abstract paintings. There seemed to be a continual push and pull between representation and abstraction, an underlying tug of war that he has mostly abandoned with the paintings in *Becoming Pastoral*.

That said, many of the works in this exhibition could actually have been details from those earlier paintings save for the loose, restless mark making. And while he has given himself permission to make strong, gestural statements that stand on their own, their titles continued to draw attention to their sources in nature and provide clues as to how the images might be read, often quite literally as in *Reeds*, *Reed Beds*, and *Breakers – The Wave*.

It is only around 2010 that Kingswood seems to break free of those associations and make paintings with little or no association to the visible world. The *Untitled* paintings and especially the painting, *Claire*, with its cryptic language and rebellious composition, become untethered from what has come before and are exciting for that reason and for the formal inventiveness they reveal.

It is interesting that Kingswood would choose this point in time to return to representational painting rather than dig deeper into the abstract language that he was developing for himself. One would understand though if the reason is that we now need, more than ever, to shine a spotlight on the natural world, and to have an artist like Ron Kingswood articulate why it matters so much. But no matter what the reason, one can see that he has brought the lessons learned from this “time away” to the paintings he is creating today.

Brian Meehan  
Executive Director  
Museum London

‘To enjoy aesthetically means to enjoy myself in a sensuous object diverse from myself, to empathize myself to it.’

Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*

There is no better time to consider the work of Ron Kingswood than when the world loses its balance. An artist widely regarded for his depictions of wildlife made noble in their surroundings, Kingswood’s practice has long possessed a deep respect for nature, with an enigmatic mind that is cognizant of the truths of organic life as only an ardent lifelong observer could.

Produced during a self-imposed exile from his lauded representational work, Kingswood departed from literal references in search of something intangible over an eight-year period, challenging conventions that had previously guided his practice while producing a collection that seeks to illuminate the mysteries of our environment as manifestations of oneself.

There is a certain spiritual helplessness in our relationship with the external world. With its flux of phenomena, it has been through our own self-perceived mastery over nature that instinct has been sacrificed for precision as a safeguard against the unknown. That is not to say that the magic of nature is inevitably lost to accuracy, however, true allegorical potential, whether it be a poem, a story or a picture, relies on what is honouring the truths of its maker in order to deliver its message.

Like early Paleolithic painting, where seasonal cycles were visually represented by humans who were beginning to develop more defined evolutionary identities, monumental works such as *Twilight on the Nile* (2011) expose Kingswood’s application of paint to the surface of the canvas with his hands in large, gestural sweeps, merging the visceral and abstract to convey a sort of contemporary proof of life, or rather evidence that in this life, there is a glimmer of something primordial that still exists within us.

In more metaphorical terms—we could view disparate symbolic elements and the evident urge towards abstraction in works such as *Claire* (2013) and *Untitled* (2011) as visual yearnings for a primitive response that is more heedful to the offerings of nature. Guiding the viewer through ambiguous narratives, Kingswood suggests a less restrictive manner of interpreting our environment that prioritizes empathy over the more material considerations of our existence.

The emotion invoked in us to hear and feel a warm wind stirring through the trees or the delicate quiet of a resting body of water, undisturbed on the surface, yet abuzz with activity below, is conveyed with great flourish in works such as *After Monet* (2009). Here, the sensory rhythm of feeling is automatic and not exacting in Kingswood's ability to capture the fundamental expressions of imagined life in a pond, by deconstructing (much as children so effectively do) as a means of relating to and understanding his subject.

As we reflect on the work in this series, it becomes clear that Kingswood's quest for a deeper connection to the landscape has ultimately not been focused on disqualifying conventional modes of representation, rather the paintings in *Becoming Pastoral* define what truly should be representative of our time; accepting that which is diverse to us, free from the constraints of conformity where we can project ourselves onto the world in a conscious manner, ideally with Kingswood's quiet elegance.

Moira McKee  
Director  
EXCAVO

Becoming Pastoral  
Artwork

*After Monet* (2009)

Oil and oil stick on canvas

66 x 66"





*Twilight on the Nile* (2010)

Oil and graphite on canvas

90 x 90"





*The Water Rose and Covered the Mountains* (2010)

Oil and graphite on canvas

76 x 82"





*Becoming Pastoral #1* (2008)

Oil, lithocrayon pencil and graphite on canvas panel

24 x 24"



*Becoming Pastoral #3* (2008)

Oil, lithocrayon pencil and graphite on canvas panel

24 x 24"





The Slaughter (2007)

Oil and graphite on board

24 x 17"



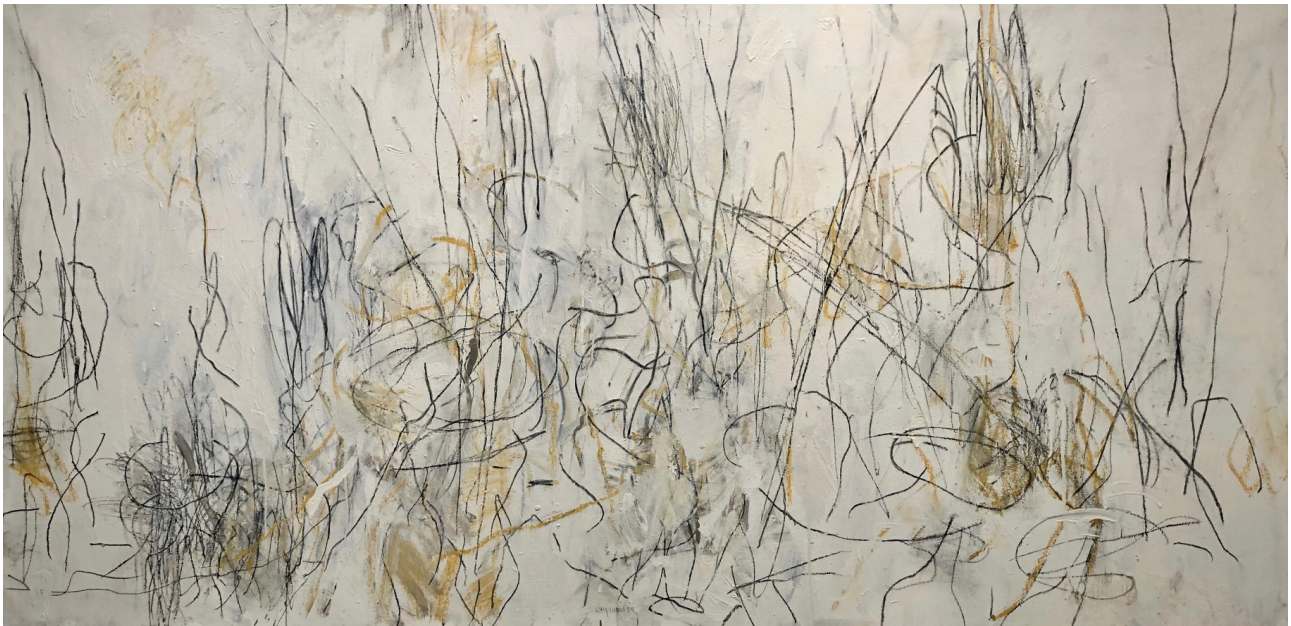


*Walpole* (2009)

Oil and oil stick on canvas

38 x 76"





*The Breakers-Wave (2007)*

Oil and graphite on board

17 x 24"

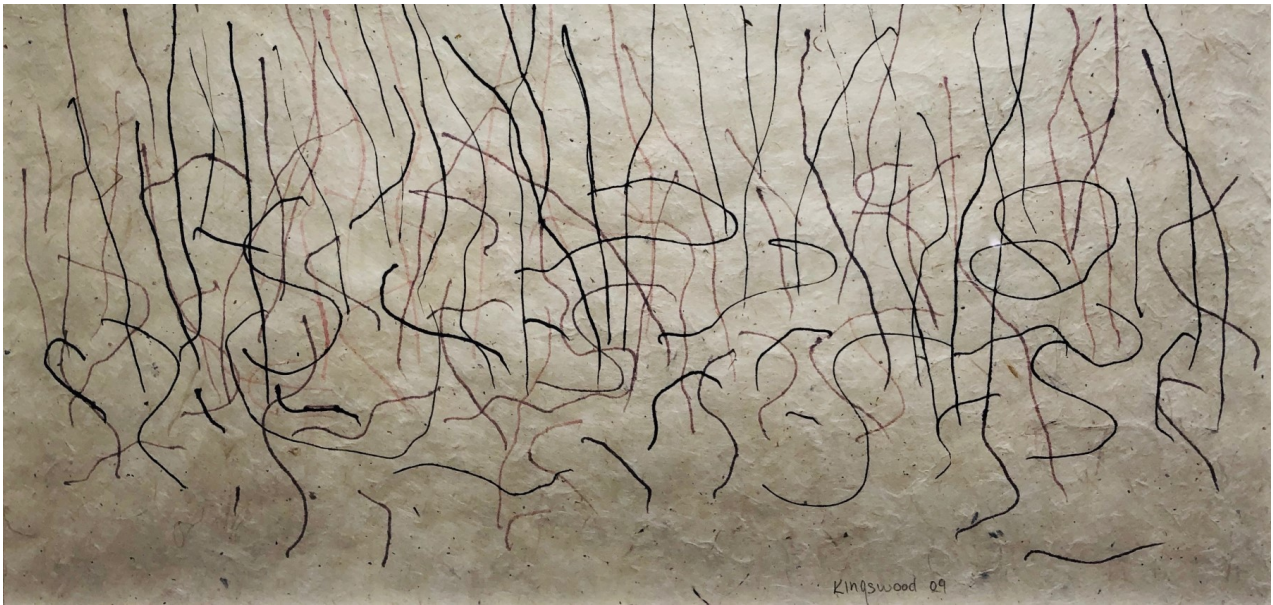


RK 26-07

*Walpole Series* (2009)

Ink on rice paper

9.5 x 18.5"



*La Danse* (2009)

Oil and graphite on canvas

17 x 24"

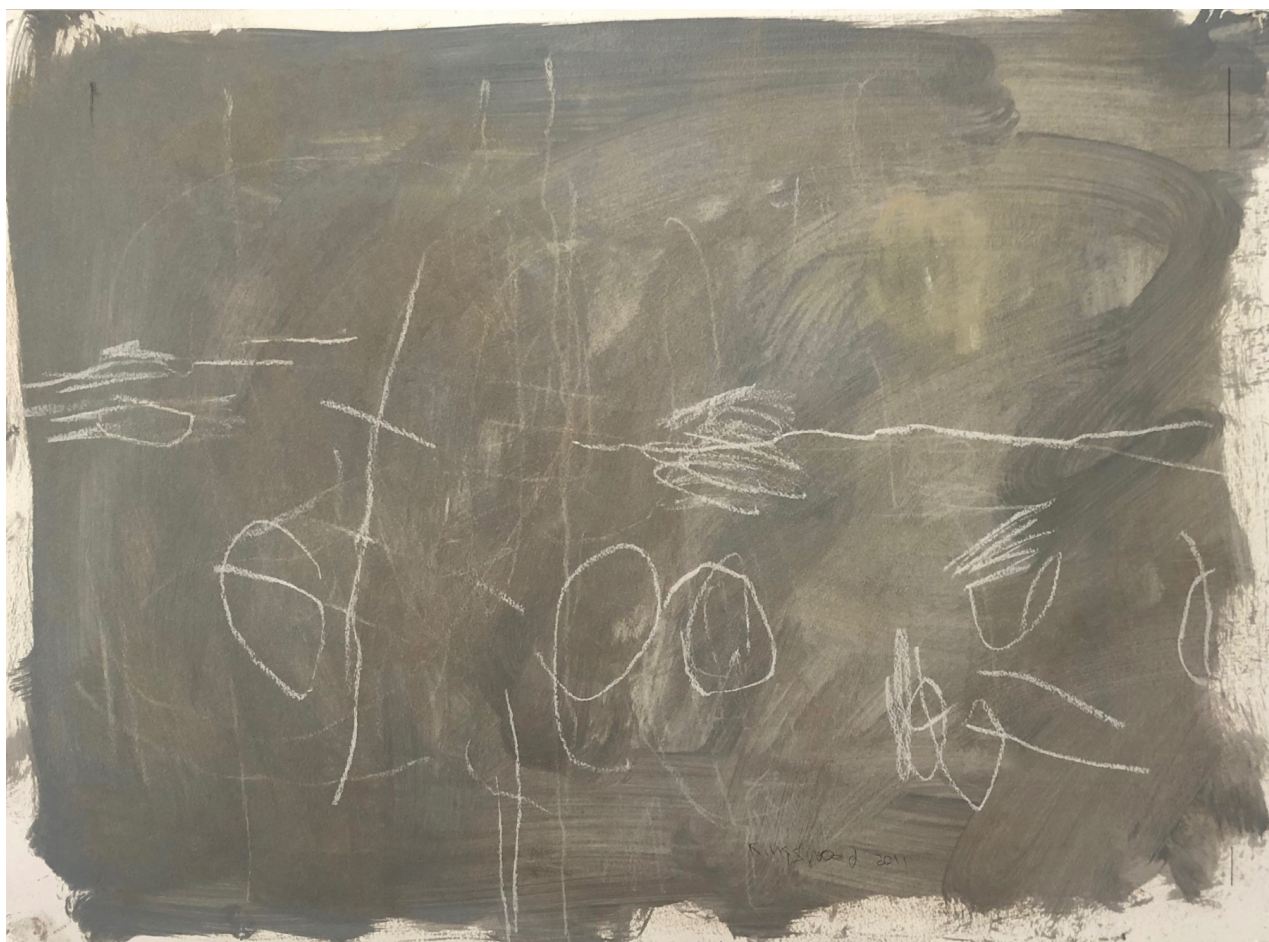




*Untitled* (2011)

Oil, chalk and graphite on paper

22 x 29.5"

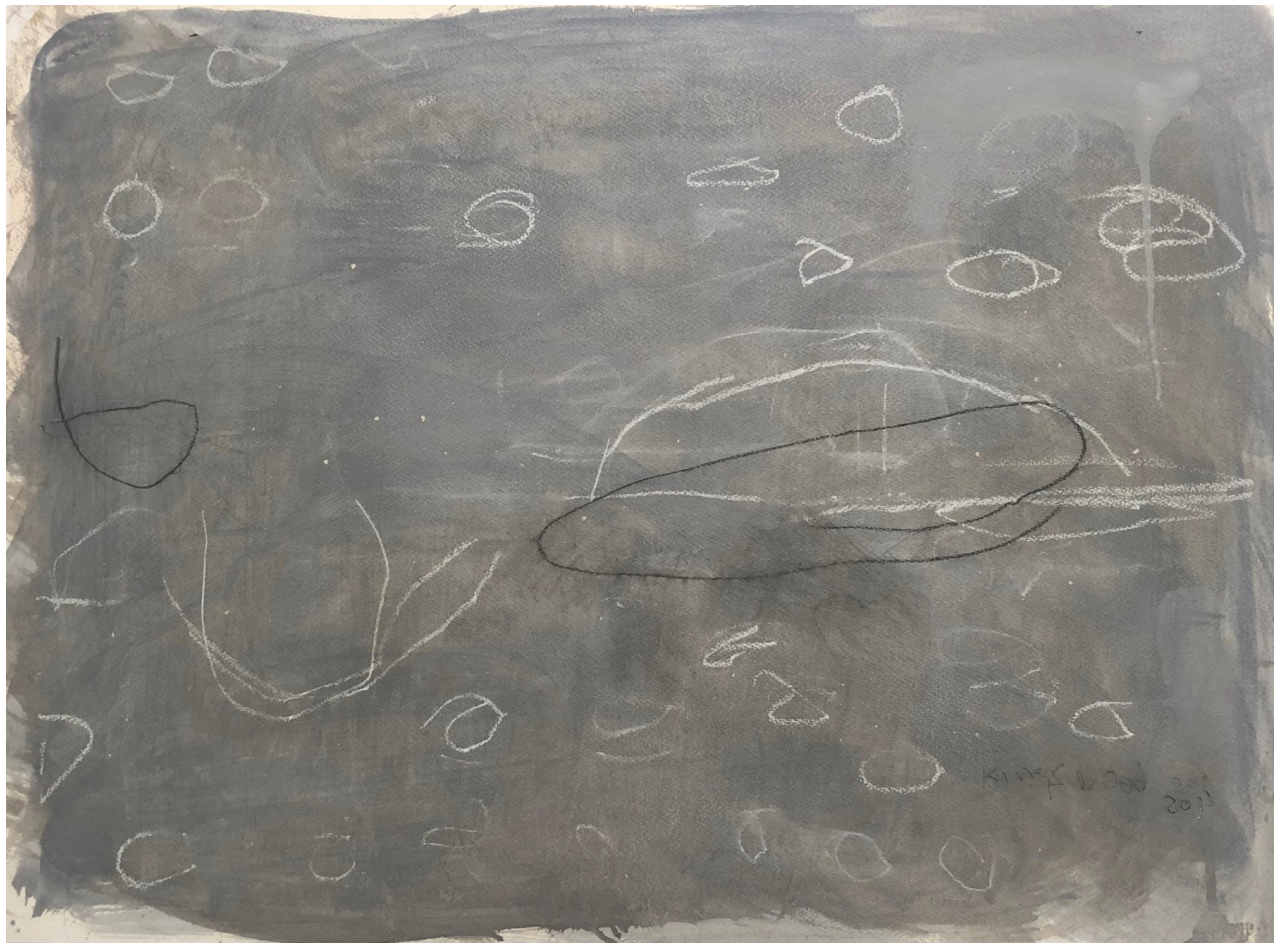


*Untitled* (2011)

Oil, chalk and graphite on paper

22 x 29.5"





*Barren* (2010)

Oil and oil stick on board

16 x 16"



*Reed Bed* (2009)

Oil, oil stick and graphite on canvas

32 x 33"





*Birth of the Oceans* (2005)

Oil on canvas

96 x 62"



*Resting Place* (2020)

Oil on canvas

55 x 50"







Ron Kingswood

*Becoming Pastoral*

Installation View



Ron Kingswood

*Becoming Pastoral*

Installation View



Ron Kingswood

*Becoming Pastoral*

Installation View





Ron Kingswood

*Becoming Pastoral*

Installation View



Ron Kingswood  
Curriculum Vitae

Born 1959, lives in Sparta, Ontario.

## **Education**

H.B. Beal Art, London, Ontario

University of Western Ontario, Bird Ecology and Ornithology

## **Solo Exhibitions**

2020 Jonathan Cooper, London, UK

2020 Excavo, London, Ontario

2018 Jonathan Cooper, London, UK

2016 Jonathan Cooper, London, UK

2014 Jonathan Cooper, London, UK

2012 Odon Wagner Contemporary, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

2010 St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre, St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada

2006 Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM

2005 Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, WY

2002 Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM

2001 Marin-Harris Gallery, Jackson Hole, WY

## **Group Exhibitions**

2020 Masterpiece London, London, UK

2020 The open Art Fair, London, UK

2020 Wildlife Discovery, Trailside Galleries, Jackson Hole, WY

2019 25th Anniversary Exhibition, Simpson Gallagher Gallery, Cody, WY

2018 *Jonathan Cooper: 30 Years*, Jonathan Cooper, London, UK

Buffalo Bill Art show and Sale, Cody, WY

*Birds of a feather*, Trailside Galleries, Scottsdale, AZ

2017 Simpson Gallagher Gallery, WY

*Wildlife Discovered*, Trailside Galleries, Scottsdale, AZ

2014-18 Masterpiece London, London, UK

Bada Antiques & Fine Art Fair, London, UK

2015-17 Palm Beach Jewellery, Art & Antique Show, FL

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, Canada  
*Particles + Waves, 12 Contemporary Artists*, ILIAD Contemporary, NY  
*Beautiful Calamity, Hollis Heichemer, Ron Kingswood, Ellen Wagener*,  
 J. Cacciola Gallery, NY
- 2009 *Drawing/Not Drawing*, J. Cacciola Gallery, NY  
 Jonathan Cooper, London, UK
- 2008 *20th Anniversary Exhibition*, Jonathan Cooper, London, UK  
 Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, WY  
 The Bank Job, London, Ontario, Canada  
 Sandra Ainsley Gallery, Toronto, Canada
- 2007 Loveland Museum, Loveland, Colorado  
 Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary, Jackson Hole, WY
- 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, Canada
- 2004 *Off the Path*, Jackson Street Gallery, Jackson Hole, WY
- 2003 Canada House Gallery, Banff, Alberta, Canada
- 2002 *Spring Exhibit*, Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta & Vancouver, British  
 Columbia, Canada
- 1999 *Crossing Paths*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico  
*American Miniatures*, Settler's West Gallery, Tucson, Arizona 1998  
 Spanierman Gallery, NY

## **Museum Exhibitions**

- 2020 Prix de West, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum,  
 Oklahoma City, OK
- 2020 Western Visions, National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson, WY
- 2019 London Museum, London, Ontario, Canada
- 2017 *Birds in Art*, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI

- 2015 *Birds in Art*, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI  
*Western Visions*, National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY
- 2014-15 *Environmental Impact Exhibition* (Touring) organised by David Wagner:  
 Canton Museum of Art, OH; The R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, LA;  
 Kalama zoo 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 *Wildlife Art of the New Century II*, National Museum of Wildlife Art,  
 Jackson Hole, WY
- 2000-04 *Western Visions Miniature Show*, National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson  
 Hole, WY
- 2000 *The Single Tree*, Museum London, London, Ontario, Canada
- 1998- 01 *Wilderness Reunion*, Algonquin Museum, Ontario, Canada
- 1998 *80 Years of Experiment 1912-1992*, Beal Art Museum, London, Ontario
- 1996 *Wildlife, the Artist's View*, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum,  
 Wausau, Wisconsin
- 1992-93 *Southwestern Art Exhibit*, Museum London, London, Ontario, Canada
- 1989 *Southwestern Art Exhibit*, Museum London, London, Ontario, Canada

### **Museum Collections**

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

### **Selected Collections**

Husky Injection Molding Systems, Bolton, Ontario  
 Morgan Stanley, Tokyo, Japan

Seroyal, Toronto, Ontario

Weston Foundation, Toronto, Ontario

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



Ron Kingswood in his studio. Photograph by Linda Kingswood

## Credits

This publication is to commemorate the exhibition, *Becoming Pastoral* by Ron Kingswood.  
October 1 to November 14, 2020, at EXCAVO, 711 Central Ave, London, ON.

Photography: Moira McKee

Foreword: Jonathan Cooper, Brian Meehan, Moira McKee

Design: Laura Woermke

© EXCAVO and authors

Cover: La Danse (2009) Oil and graphite on canvas 17 x 24”

Exhibition and publication “Becoming Pastoral by Ron Kingswood” is sponsored by Elgin Contracting and Restoration LTD.





ELGIN CONTRACTING  
AND RESTORATION LTD.