

14 December 2000

Mr. Paul Lamb
618 Lavaca Street Room 9
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation the other day. I have no doubt that, if there is a meeting of the minds concerning the Nowlin project, something very special will result.

The Gentling brothers are not muralists. They are primarily painters of landscapes, portraits and still lifes in a meticulous drybrush watercolor style. And yet this description certainly does not do them justice. They are authors and world travelers with a deep and abiding interest in History, natural history, art scholarship, music and world archaeology.

Next November the University of Texas Press is issuing an impressive trade edition of their famous elephant folio, OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, unanimously hailed by critics as the most magnificent book in the history of Texas publishing.

The UT Press is also going to publish an important new book featuring the whole range of Gentling art. The book will be titled FROM TIME TO TIME and will include not only their landscapes, portraits and still lifes, but also their magnificent mural designs for Fort Worth's Bass Performance Hall, some of their recent bird paintings, portraits of famous composers, and their unique views of Tenochtitlan and Aztec Mexico. Their Aztec researches and art works will eventually be published by the University of Texas Press in a special two-volume set to be titled THE ONE REED YEAR.

In 1998 the Gentling twins were honored by the Texas Audubon Society as their official artists to celebrate the centennial of the Audubon Society in Texas. An exhibition of their bird paintings sponsored by the Society is currently touring the state. Later that same year their home town of Fort Worth also made them the city's official artists to commemorate its sesquicentennial.

To the best of my knowledge Scott and Stuart Gentling are the only artists ever to have their art exhibited in all of Fort Worth's major museums - the Kimbell Museum, the Amon Carter Museum, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History (which purchased all forty of the original bird paintings created for their folio OF BIRDS AND TEXAS) and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. They have also lectured at all these institutions including the Dallas Museum of Art. The topics they have discussed have varied widely from 17th century Dutch painting, the history of western drawing, Precolumbian art and symbolism and representational painting in the world of modern art.

They are knowledgeable collectors of all kinds of art ranging from contemporary abstract art to Japanese prints and oriental painting as well as Greek and Roman antiquities and

even eighteenth century clothing. They have a fine small collection of pre-Colombian art highlighted be a unique gathering of Post Classic Central Mexican art that Nikolai Grube recently described as the finest such collection he had ever seen in private hands. I might mention that, although Aztec studies have occupied them for many years, they began as students of Maya archaeology in 1960 when they acquired their first Maya book - J. Eric S Thompson's MAYA CIVILIZATION. They have a fine small collection of Maya vases, stucco heads and Jaina figures, and they try to keep up with all the recent advances in Maya studies.

Scott's researches on the use of geometric systems in Maya and other pre-Colombian design has been acknowledged as a truly ground-breaking accomplishment. Stuart just returned from Mexico City where he delivered a major paper in Spanish on the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. He was introduced to the audience of teachers, scholars and archaeologists by Eduardo Matos, director of the Templo Mayor Museum and one of the world's leading Aztec scholars.

Needless to say, the Gentlings will eventually have to view the space or spaces designated for art work. Their current work schedule is rather complicated but might be adjustable, since it sounds as if the Nowlin project is a very special one that will be visited by important Mayanists and others in the years ahead. The Gentlings are definitely interested in possibly being part of such an endeavor.

Stuart Gentling has told me that he and his brother would especially like to create something that would not simply be a slavish imitation of Maya motifs or painting styles, but something in a more contemporary manner using the rich symbolism that is at the heart of Maya thought. Stuart said that murals associated with an observatory immediately suggest a host of possibilities.

If after reviewing the enclosed information, you are still interested in pursuing the matter further, might I suggest that you and the Nowlins come to Fort Worth to see Gentling art at first hand at their studio. If all goes well, Scott and Stuart could then come to Austin to examine the project. The Gentlings have warm feelings for that city, having published their folio there.

I might add that after visiting the Gentlings at their studio in the Cultural District in 1998, Laura Bush invited them to exhibit their paintings at her office art gallery in the Capital building. The Gentling bird folio is proudly displayed in the library of the Governor's mansion, and George Bush acquired a set of folio plates to hang in one of his offices. It is certain that they will be asked to do future projects for the Bushes like they did for the Reagans in the 1980's.

I do hope that the photos and printed material here will be helpful. I would appreciate it if you would return them at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me. I'll be waiting to hear from you.