

GENTLING

21 December 2000

Ted Pillsbury
Pillsbury Peters Fine Art
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Dallas, Texas 75201

Dear Ted,

Scott and I have just received the first galley proofs (alas, only in black and white) of the new bird book from the University of Texas Press. It is going to measure a wonderful 10 1/2" X 13", exactly what I asked for. It will also contain John Graves's now famous essay from our original folio. In fact all the original text is preserved.

The new material, a long essay by me titled "Of Birds and Texas, Audubon and Us" tells of our travails in publishing the elephant folio and our fortuitous discovery and purchase of an original Audubon bird painting lost since 1825. Our book had been dedicated to Audubon long before we made the discovery. The essay tells how that painting miraculously saved our publishing venture from certain disaster. There are also twenty eight more watercolor bird studies so that all in all the book will be, I can tell, stunningly good looking and an interesting read as well. The UT Press is doubling the usual size of its initial printing, and they are not stinting on production costs.

I have purchased 1,000 unbound copies of the new book which I will have custom bound. They will be signed and numbered as "Artists' Copies" and will be for sale at \$350.00 each. I have already sold about half the books to former purchasers of the the original folio, but it might be a good idea to have a book signing and sale at Pillsbury Peters sometime after the book appears next November. We could also offer Giclee prints of many of the most popular bird and landscape prints from the book as well. A framed set of the prints would make a very handsome small show. Laura Bush about five weeks ago asked me if I would have a book signing in Austin with a percentage of the proceeds to go to the Laura Bush endowment fund for the new Austin Art Museum. She said that she would personally sponsor the event.

The main reason I'm writing you now is because the UT Press is beginning to pressure Scott and me to sign a contract for the next book they want to do on us. This book will cover the entire range of our artistic interests and production. Its 100 reproductions will not only deal with our portraits, still lifes and landscapes but also Scott's portraits of important composers (which are really quite wonderful) our mural designs for the Bass Performance Hall, a few new bird paintings and a selection of our Aztec paintings. The book will be titled "From Time to Time, the Art of Scott and Stuart Gentling."

The UT Press people are very excited about doing this book and will do, I'm sure, a top quality job with it. It will also be a large book like the forthcoming bird book. I will also

purchase 1,000 copies of "From Time to Time" for custom binding and private sale. The publication of this second book might also be a good time to have our debut exhibit at Pillsbury Peters with the show perhaps traveling on to Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe and even New York. This will be the best opportunity Scott and I will probably ever have to offer our art to a wider audience. If the venture is successful it could have a profound effect on our careers. Even Marla Price casually expressed to me an interest in a possible show to coincide with the issuing of "From Time to Time." She may not have really meant it, but it might be worth exploring.

In order to settle the terms of the contract for "From time to Time" I will have to describe in sufficient detail what we intend to include in the new book. Although I see it as more of a picture book with less text than the bird book, I do want our audience to get some idea through the text of just who Scott and I are and what our art is all about.

To that end Scott and I would be honored if you would write an essay to be the main lead in the book. As our agent and friend as well as an admirer of our work for some time, you would be, in my opinion, the ideal person to do it. Not to mention that you are an interesting and engaging writer, well-respected in the international art community. I really want the text of this book to be every bit as interesting as the text of our bird book which will be a tough act to follow. If you decide to do it, I will, of course give you a hefty file on us that will compliment the notebook of painting photos that you already have.

I have also asked Michael Thomas and Dave Hickey to participate. I have suggested to Michael that he do an interview with Scott and me that would allow us to directly discuss our philosophy of art and why we chose to be the kind of artists that we are. Michael has enthusiastically accepted. He is now closely associated with the New York Historical Society and would love to do a show on our birds and other things to hang next to the Society's unrivaled collection of original Audubons. What a wonderful denouement for our fantastic connection to John James Audubon!

I asked Dave Hickey to contribute a short and hopefully amusing essay of perhaps 1,500 to 2,000 words perhaps dealing with the survival and re-emergence of representational painting in late 20th century art. He told me that he was tied up with the Site Santa Fe show for much of 2001, but that he would like to do it if he could. I just sent him a letter formally inviting him to participate and hope to hear from him soon. If you think it is a good idea perhaps you might give him a call. All the text does not have to be in the editors' hands, I believe, until the early spring of 2002, so there should be enough time if he really wants to contribute something.

To have such good and interesting writers as you, Michael and Dave will add a very special quality to the new book that truly excites the people at UT Press. If the forthcoming bird book is as successful as I think it could be, I believe that UT Press will go the extra mile to make "From Time to Time"

a special production as well.

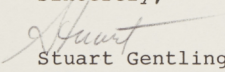
I should also mention that UT Press wants us to sign a contract for our Aztec book, "The One Reed Year" as well. They have promised to publish it in two volumes just as we hoped. That book is still some years away, but when it finally appears, it is going to be, I think, the most beautiful book of its kind since Stephens and Catherwood. Three days ago I was visited by Mimi Crossly, curator of pre-Colombian art at the Houston Museum of Natural Science - a really beautiful museum. They want to have in 2003 a major exhibit of our paintings, drawings, models and collection of original Aztec and Mixtec art. (By the way, Mayanist Nicolai Grube visited our small studio a few weeks ago and was flabbergasted at our collection. He said that it was the finest collection of Aztec and Mixtec material that he had ever seen in private hands. He wants to use several pieces in his next book.)

I should also mention that my lecture in Mexico City was a complete success. I was introduced to a standing room only audience of scholars, archaeologists and pre-Colombian art lovers by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. I did the entire one hour and twenty minute lecture in Spanish! It was wonderfully received. Eduardo Matos also set up a special archaeological tour for me that permitted me to visit all the off limits digs in and around the Templo Mayor. It was truly an opportunity of a lifetime.

So Ted, this is where things stand with Scott and me at the moment. I really believe that with Michael Thomas dealing with Scott and me personally as artists, Dave Hickey commenting on the place of realism in contemporary art and you writing on the specific aesthetics of our art and how our various interests are all interrelated - as they are - the book would be interesting, topical and scholarly. Scott and I will also write personal commentaries to each of the color plates.

Thank you for the Wayne Thiebaud catalogue. I really admire his work. The modern art Museum here asked me to lecture on their current show, but I had to cancel at the last minute to go to Mexico to speak on the Aztecs. I hope things are going well with you and your family. Please convey Scott's and my best holiday wishes to your family, to Holly and your gallery staff. As soon as the craziness of the holidays are passed I want to come over and see your gallery's metamorphosis. Until then may you and your family have a super Christmas and a very successful new year.

Sincerely,


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